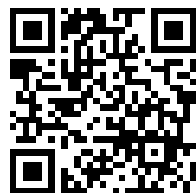


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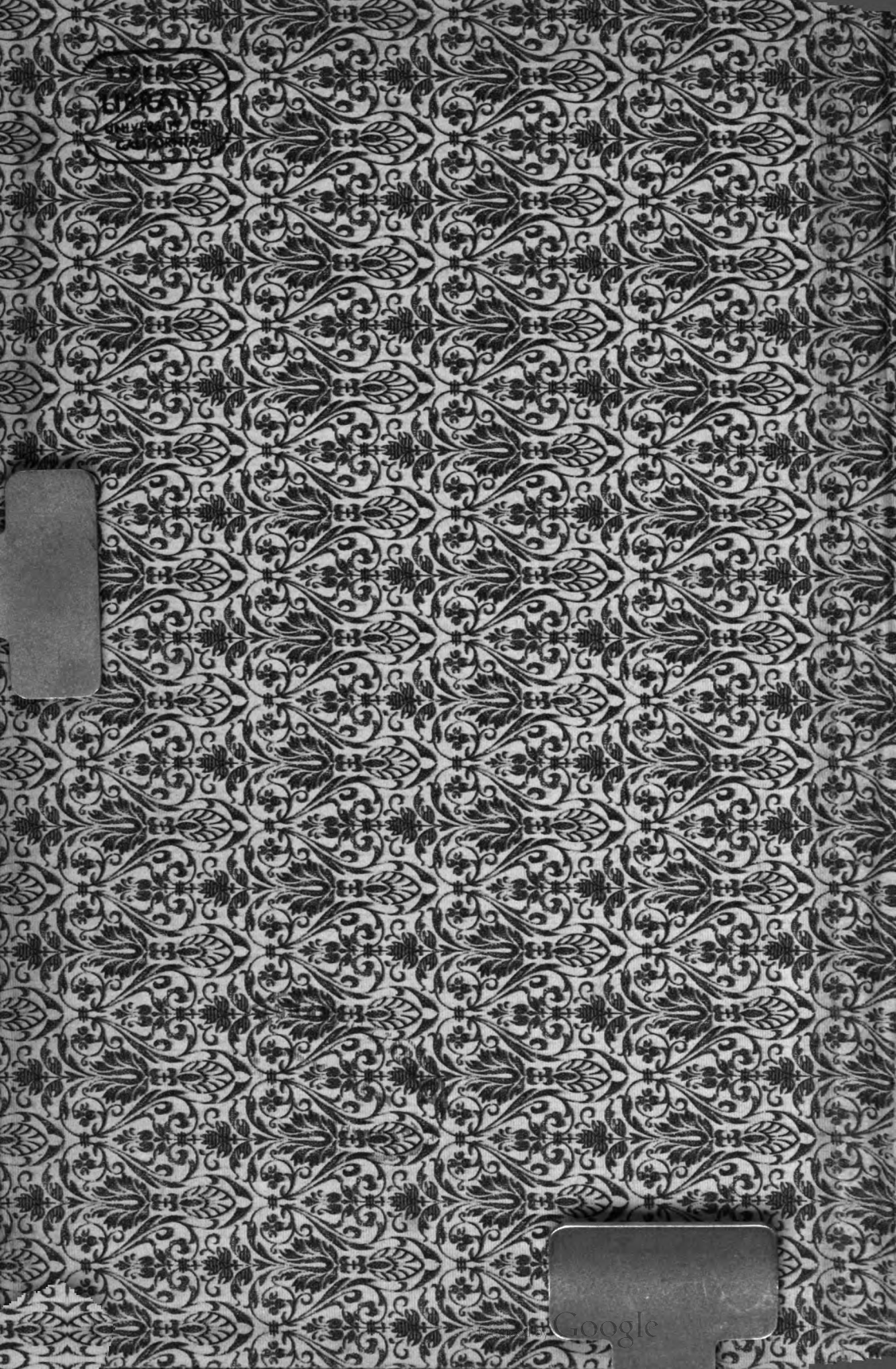
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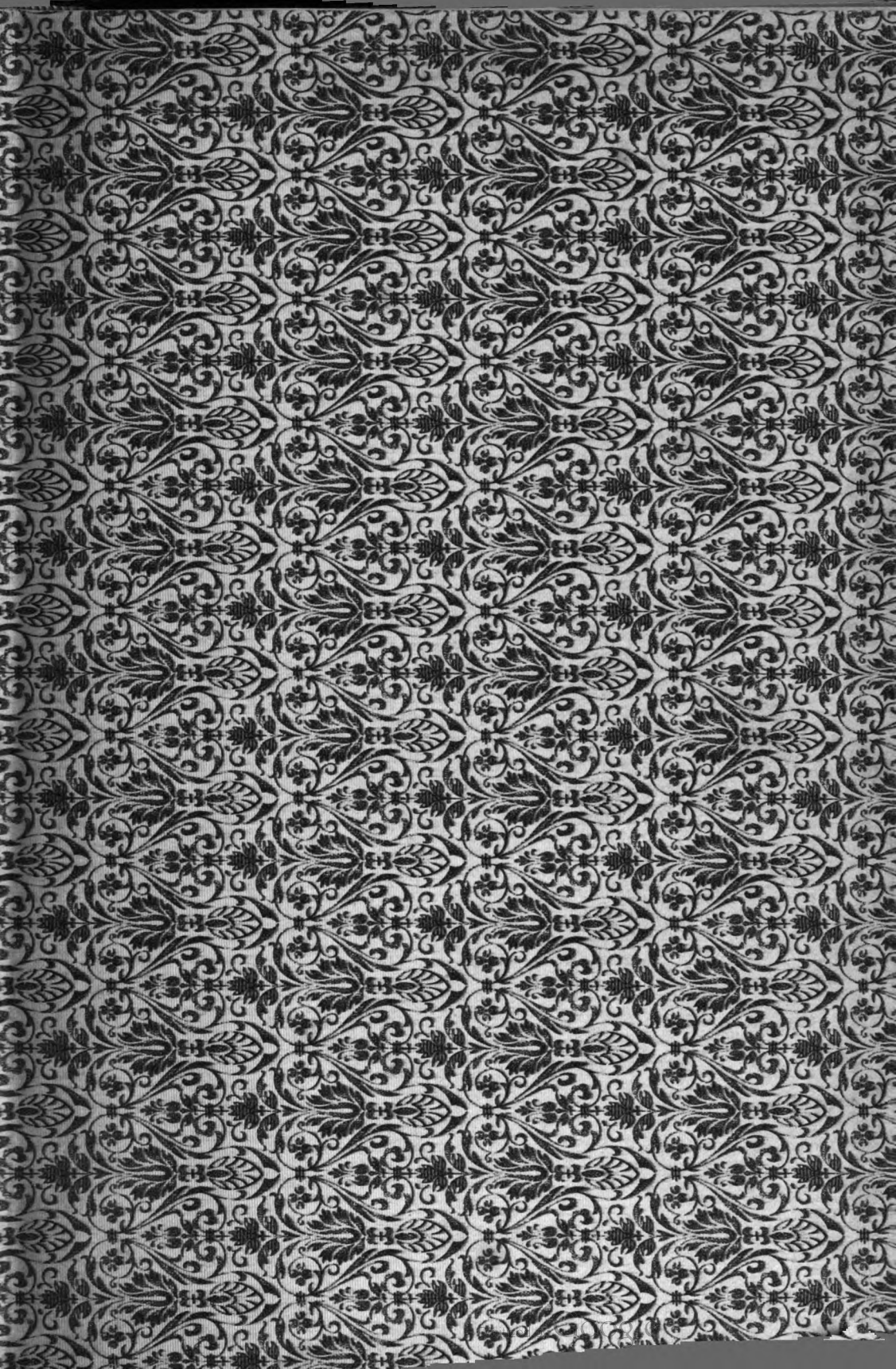
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THE  
PULPIT ORATOR.

CONTAINING, FOR EACH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR,

SEVEN ELABORATE SKELETON SERMONS,

VIZ.: TWO HOMILETIC—ON EPISTLE AND GOSPEL—ONE DOGMATICAL, ONE LITURGICAL, ONE SYMBOLICAL, AND TWO MORAL.

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BY REV. JOHN EVANGELIST ZOLLNER.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN, WITH PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR, AND ADAPTED BY

REV. AUGUSTINE WIRTH, O. S. B.

WITH PREFACE BY REV. A. A. LAMBING.

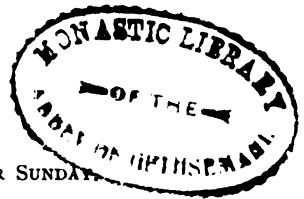
FOURTH EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED.

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VOL. II.

FROM THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY TO EASTER SUNDAY.

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FR. PUSTET,

Printer to the Holy See and the S. Congregation of Rites.

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## SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

**EPISTLE.** *I, Thessalon.* 2-10. Brethren: We give thanks to God always for you all; making a remembrance of you in our prayers without ceasing, being mindful of the work of your faith, and labor, and charity, and of the enduring of the hope of our Lord Jesus Christ before God and our Father; knowing, brethren beloved of God, your election; for our Gospel hath not been to you in word only, but in power also, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much fulness, as you know what manner of men we have been among you for your sakes. And you became followers of us, and of the Lord: receiving the word in much tribulation, with joy of the Holy Ghost: so that you were made a pattern to all who believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you was spread abroad the word of the Lord; not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place, your faith which is towards God is gone forth, so that we need not to speak anything. For they themselves relate of us, what manner of entrance we had unto you; and how you were converted to God from idols, to serve the living and true God. And to wait for his Son from heaven (whom he raised from the dead), Jesus, who hath delivered us from the wrath to come.

---

## 1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

### WHAT THE APOSTLE PARTICULARLY PRAISES IN THE THESSALONIANS.

The lesson for this day, being the sixth Sunday after Epiphany, is taken from the first Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians. Thessalonica was not only the capital, but also one of the most renowned and opulent cities of Macedonia. Its inhabitants consisted of Greeks, Romans, Jews, and Pagans. St. Paul preached the Gospel in this city with great success. But the unbelieving Jews, envying his success, raised such a commotion against him, that he was obliged to quit the city. He went then to the very cradle of art and science and preached in the Areopagus of Athens. Hearing here that his converts in Thessalonica were under a severe persecution ever since his departure, and fearing they would lose their fortitude, he sent Timothy to strengthen and comfort them in their sufferings.

In the meantime, St. Paul hurried on to Corinth, where Timothy was to meet him and report the situation. After a few months Timothy arrived, bringing the joyful tidings that the Christian congregation, in spite of all the Jewish persecution, was in a flourishing condition, but

that, unfortunately, in some doctrines of faith, they were not sufficiently instructed. Then it was that St. Paul took up the pen, and wrote the first Epistle, in the nineteenth year after our Lord's ascension. I should remark also that this is the first of his fourteen Epistles in the order of time. It will be, then, our pleasant task to-day to consider the portion of this inspired letter which the Church proposes to us on this occasion.

The Apostle assures the Thessalonians that he gives thanks to God always, and prays for them especially *on account of the works of their faith, and labor, and charity, and the enduring of the hope of our Lord Jesus Christ before God and our Father*. What he praises in them is:

1. *The works of their faith*. As we read in the Acts of the Apostles, a great multitude of the Pagans at Thessalonica had embraced Christianity. These converts were conspicuous for the strength and earnestness of their faith. The Apostle gladly recognizes their pre-eminence in this divine virtue, giving thanks to God therefore. Had we no other instructions on the subject, the words of St. Paul in this day's epistle would abundantly suffice to convince us of the necessity of faith, the meritoriousness of faith, and the exalted character of the divine virtue of faith. Faith, indeed, is the foundation of all Christian virtue. It is faith that leads us to the knowledge of God and of all supernatural truth, discloses to us our temporal and eternal destiny, furnishes us with courage and strength, in order to overcome all obstacles to salvation and always to walk in the path of virtue. Faith is the first requisite for salvation, for "without faith it is impossible to please God."—*Heb. 11: 6*. We possess this faith from our infancy, we received it in baptism. Let us give thanks to God for this unmerited gift of faith, and let us guard ourselves lest we lose it in this, our faithless time.

2. The Apostle praises the Thessalonians also *on account of the works of their faith*. They manifested their faith by a pious, virtuous life. A living faith, not a dead one, saves. "By works a man is justified, and not by faith only."—*St. James 2: 24*. "As he who wishes to go to a certain place, needs two things for the obtaining of his journey's end—namely, the eye and the feet—so he who wishes to go to heaven needs the eye of faith and the feet of good works."—*St. Gregory the Great*. A Christian who does not live according to his faith must expect a severer lot hereafter than the heathens, because he knows God and his holy law better, and has greater graces for salvation. "That servant who knew the will of his Lord, and hath not prepared, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."—*Luke 12: 27*. Not only believe well, but also live well.

3. *The labors of love*.



(a.) The Apostle here speaks of the love of God and our neighbor. It is the greatest of all virtues, for it comprises all others and is the fulfilling of the law (*Rom. 13: 10*); it is love that gives to all other virtues and good works their true value and renders them meritorious before God (*I. Cor. 13: 1, 3*), that unites us with God (*I. John 4: 16*); and prepares for us unspeakable happiness.—*I. Cor. 2: 9*.

(b.) Charity has *its labors*. It consists not in pious, sweet sentiments, but in a faithful performance of the will of God. What, then, is the will of God? That we mortify ourselves interiorly and exteriorly, that we be patient, meek and humble of heart, that we overcome all temptations, love even our enemies and those who injure and offend us, and do good to them that hate and persecute us. All this costs much labor and self-denial. It involves sacrifices. Charity, therefore, has its labors. Because the Thessalonians had assumed these labors of love willingly and cheerfully, the Apostle praises them. How do matters stand with us? Can we with truth pray, "O God, I love thee above all things?"

#### 4. *The enduring of the hope of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

(a.) Hope is also a very great and important virtue. Like faith, it not only shows us the felicity of heaven and the means of acquiring that felicity, but it enables us to await that boon with patience and withal the most firm and unshaken confidence. Hope detaches our heart from the fleeting goods and transitory pleasures of this world, and raises it to the contemplation of the eternal. It comforts and strengthens us in all the vicissitudes of life, and while giving us encouragement, is itself the most powerful incentive to heroic undertakings and the preformance of the noblest deeds. Such is Christian hope. "A Christian who trusts in God may be tempted, but he can not be overcome, for, wherever he is, he is not without God, nor without strength, illumination, consolation, or divine assistance."—*St. Cyprian*.

(b.) The Thessalonians possessed the virtue of hope blended with perseverance in an admirable degree. In expectation of that eternal felicity which Jesus Christ promised to his true followers, they endured with patience and constancy all the sufferings and privations incident to a virtuous life. Like the Christians of Thessalonica, we, too, are suffering persecutions at present. The Catholic Church has numberless enemies to-day, who are laboring incessantly for her destruction and downfall. But let us never lose courage; let us persevere in calm Christian hope. She lived to see the end of a Julian the Apostate, of a Mazzini and a Palmerston, chanted the dying requiem over the

graves of a Napoleon and a Victor Emmanuel, and she shall live to see the end of Bismarck and Gambetta.

5. The Apostle praises the Thessalonians on account of the signs of election which they manifested in their lives (4, 5). Among these signs he numbers, besides the three theological virtues, which they possessed in an eminent degree, *the miracles* which God vouchsafed them; for instance, the gift of tongues, prophecy, the healing of the sick, especially *the extraordinary zeal with which they received the Gospel and lived according to its ordinances*. From this he infers that they are in great favor with God, and shall obtain eternal salvation. St. Paul, without a special revelation of God, could not with infallible certainty know the "election" of the Thessalonians to eternal salvation, but seeing that God enriched them with so many and so extraordinary graces, he had every reason to believe that they were really of the number of the elect. With regard to ourselves, we must, as this same Apostle elsewhere says (*Phil.* 2: 12), work out our salvation with fear and trembling, and this partly because of our weakness and inconstancy, and partly because of the many and great dangers of salvation by which we are surrounded as long as we live. This fear is most salutary; "for, as in a house in which there is an armed soldier, no thief, robber, or enemy dares to enter, so, if we have the fear of God in our hearts, no enemy of our salvation will dare to penetrate thereto."—*St. Chrys.* At the same time we must hope for salvation with joyful confidence, for, if we be only in earnest, detest and avoid all evil from the bottom of our hearts, watch, pray, and remain profoundly humble, God will certainly preserve us in his love and grace and grant us a holy and happy end. "If our heart do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God; and whatsoever we shall ask we shall receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."—*I. John* 3: 21. 22.

6. The Apostle also praises the Thessalonians *because they became followers of him and of Jesus Christ*, receiving the word in much tribulation, with the joy of the Holy Ghost. Our divine Saviour and St. Paul endured many tribulations and persecutions in the preaching of the Gospel. But Jesus and St. Paul endured all these sufferings and tribulations not only with patience, but with holy joy. Thus, St. Paul says of himself: "I am filled with comfort, I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation."—*II. Cor.* 7: 4. Now, because the Thessalonians suffered much for the Gospel (*Acts* 17: 5, 9), and endured all with a holy joy, the Apostle calls them followers of him and of Jesus Christ, and praises them. To suffer persecution for justice' sake with joy is the most sublime and consequently the most praiseworthy

virtue: it is possible only to those who are by grace raised above mere human nature, and who have made their body insensible to everything that could pain them.

Endeavor that you also may be praised for your joy in sufferings. If for the sake of virtue or faith you be rebuked, despised, mocked, or persecuted, do not lose your courage, nor become despondent, much less let bitterness or hatred against your enemies and oppressors arise in your hearts; rejoice rather that Jesus Christ has deemed you worthy to suffer ignominy for the sake of his holy name. "Dearly beloved, think not strange the burning heat which is to try you, as if some new thing happened to you; but if you partake of the sufferings of Christ rejoice, that when his glory shall be revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy."—*I. Pet. 4: 12 13.*

7 Lastly, the Apostle praises the Thessalonians *on account of the excellent example which they gave to all the faithful* "You were made a pattern to all who believe in Macedonia and in Achaia." The Thessalonians became a pattern to the other Christians by their conversion and Christian conduct. At the preaching of St. Paul, they had renounced idolatry, had embraced the Christian religion, had endured with patience and constancy whatever trials and sufferings their conversion entailed upon them, and now having placed all their hope and confidence in Jesus Christ, and mindful of his coming to judge them, they were leading most holy lives. This example had the most wholesome influence upon all the Christians of Greece, for it strengthened them in their faith and inflamed their fervor. Even Pagans resolved to imitate the Thessalonians and to become Christians.

If St. Paul from heaven could write us a letter, would he praise us "*that we were made a pattern for all Christians?*" If all the Catholics upon earth were to regulate themselves by us, if they believed only as we believe, and lived as we live, would they be on the right way? Would they be convinced that they were pleasing to God and could save their souls? Perhaps they would take no exception to our faith, for the majority of us, at least, believe what the holy Catholic Church proposes to our belief, and we are willing to live and die in that faith. But just look at the lives we lead! How many are there among us who, instead of being an edification to our co-religionists, are a scandal to them? Are the shameless discourses which many Christians hold, their vain, extravagant fondness for dress, their carelessness in fulfilling the duties of their religion and state of life, their dissipation and vices, not scandals? Must not he who takes them for a pattern come upon devious ways and lose his soul? Should not he who would take them for a pattern, be very far from that holiness and perfection which the Apostle praised in the Thessalonians?



## PERORATION.

Take the Christians of Thessalonica for your pattern and imitate them. Practice the three theological virtues, and make your faith living, your charity active, and your hope firm and lasting. Keep with persevering fervor the commandments of God and the precepts of the Church, endure with patience the tribulations of your state of life and the afflictions incident to it, and provide things good, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men.—*Rom. 12: 17*. If you do this, you shall merit such praise as the Thessalonians had, and you may hope with confidence, that you shall be associated with them in the number of the elect for ever in heaven. Amen.

---

## SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

GOSPEL. *St. Matt. 13: 31-35*. At that time: Jesus spoke to the multitude this parable. The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown up it is greater than any herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof.

Another parable he spoke to them. The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened. All these things Jesus spoke in parables to the multitudes. and without parables he did not speak to them. That the word might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world."

---

## 2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

## THE TWO PARABLES OF THE GOSPEL.

St. Matthew remarks, at the end of the gospel for this day, that Jesus spoke all things in parables to the multitudes, that the word might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world." Among the nations of the East, and especially among the Jews, parables and similitudes were very much in use. Our Lord adhered to this manner of speech, clothing his doctrines in most beautiful pictures and similitudes, in order to give his hearers a more immediate perception of the truths he taught and to impress them the

more deeply on their minds. The prophets of old, however, had already foretold that the coming Messiah would speak in parables to the people.—*Deut.* 18: 15; *Ps.* 77: 2. Now, since Jesus really made frequent use of parables in his instructions, there is a proof in this circumstance, though insignificant in itself, that he was the Messiah promised and sent by God.

Let us to-day turn our attention to the two parables of this day's gospel and examine,

- I. *What they signify,*
- II. *What they teach us.*

### PART I.

#### A. *The parable of the mustard-seed.*

1. "*The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field.*"

(a.) By the kingdom of heaven here spoken of is meant, not the abode of Saints and angels in the kingdom of God in the next world, but the Church established by Jesus Christ in this world. She is called the kingdom of heaven, because she came from heaven, Jesus Christ, the God-man, having founded her, and because it is her destiny to sanctify men and to lead them to heaven. We must, therefore, make a distinction, as to their foundation, between temporal kingdoms and the kingdom of the Church, for the former are founded by men and have in view only their temporal welfare, while the latter is founded by God himself, and has for its object man's eternal well-being.

(b.) The *man* who sowed the grain of mustard-seed in the field is Jesus Christ. He founded the Church, and from him comes what the Church has and is: her members, her doctrine, her constitution, and means of grace. To him she also owes her durability to the end of time.—*Matt.* 16: 18.

The *field* in which the man sowed the grain of mustard-seed, is the whole human race. For it is the will of Jesus that his Church be spread over the whole earth, and that all men enter it: wherefore he said to his Apostles, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."—*Matt.* 28: 19, 20. The whole human race is his (Jesus') field, because Jesus, as the Son of God, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, is the Creator of heaven and earth, and because to him as the Redeemer belongs in particular the human race, having purchased it by the price of his precious blood. "Knowing that you

are not redeemed with corruptible gold and silver, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ."—*I. Pet.* 1: 19, 20.

2. "*Which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown up is greater than any herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof.*"

(a.) The grain of mustard-seed is so small and insignificant that it seems to be pulverized. Very little and insignificant also was the Church in its beginning. Jesus preached the Gospel for three years with indefatigable zeal, and confirmed his doctrine by numberless miracles, but how many did he convert? Ah! only a few. When he had already ascended into-heaven his Church in Jerusalem numbered only one hundred and twenty souls. Truly, a little grain of mustard-seed in comparison with the thousand millions of Pagans and Jews.

(b.) But the grain of mustard-seed remains not always little. Sown in the ground, it springs up, grows, and in the fertile East becomes among all herbs the greatest, tall and strong like a tree. Like the grain of mustard-seed, the Church grew, and by little and little became a tree which spread its branches over the whole earth. At his very first sermon on the day of Pentecost St. Peter converted three thousand Jews, and shortly after five thousand at one time. After that the Apostles preached the Gospel outside of Judea, and with such success that after a short time there was scarcely a city in the Roman Empire without its Christians. Long and bloody persecutions broke out against the Church, but they could not stem the tide of its propagation; "the blood of martyrs was the seed of Christians." After the lapse of two hundred years Tertullian could say to the Pagans: "We scarcely begin to appear in the world, and we constitute already the greater part in all your provinces. We fill your cities, your islands, your towns, your conventions, your fields, your trades, your palaces, your councils, your judiciary; we leave you nothing but your temples." After the Roman emperors had become Christian, the Church gained still greater extension, and in the fourth century the last vestiges of Paganism disappeared. At present the Church is spread over the whole earth, there is no known people among whom she has not adherents, and the number of her children increases every year. In our days especially, Protestants of the highest ranks of society and such as have distinguished themselves and excelled in literature and science, nay, the very cream of the great Universities, are flocking into the Catholic Church. Not to tire you with a long list, witness only a Manning and the immortal Newman, once the shining lights of a *human Establishment*, but now, as the beautiful etymology of the word *Cardinal* indicates, among the golden hinges of a *Divine Establishment*—placed high on

the very top of the watch-towers of the Church, as beacon-lights for all those at sea who are floundering in the seething, turbid waters of unbelief or doubt. Thus the Church in her origin and growth resembles the grain of mustard-seed.

*B. The parable of the leaven.*

*"The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened."*

1. Leaven is a sort of fermenting mixture equivalent to our yeast and well known to bakers, who use it in the dough or dead mass of meal or flour, to ferment and enliven the whole. The Pagans were a dead mass, and even the Jews had become a sad dough. Their exercises of religion were only exterior, without life and spirit. It was the leaven of Christianity that infused into them the germ and breath of life. At Pentecost the fermentation commenced among them. After they had heard the first sermon of St. Peter, they asked Peter and the other Apostles: Ye men, brethren, what shall we do? And at the admonition of Peter they did penance for their sins and were baptized.—*Acts 2: 37, etc.* This spiritual fermentation continued and extended farther and farther. The Gospel aroused men to the knowledge of their sinful life, and made them conscious of their inability to help themselves by their own strength; it revealed to them doctrines and truths of which heretofore they had no knowledge, and incited them to avail themselves of the proffered means for the salvation of their souls.

2. As leaven changes the sad, insipid mass of flour into spongy, edible bread, so Christianity had a similar effect on the conglomerated mass of humanity. Let us take a closer view of mankind before they became Christians. They were of the earth, earthly. Seeking only what flattered their inordinate inclinations, they yielded to the evil propensities of their animal nature, and perpetrated vices and crimes of every description. But mark the change effected in them as soon as they became Christians. They no longer loved the world and what the world offered to them, their heart was turned to heavenly things and belonged to God, they practiced virtues of which formerly they had no idea, such as humility, chastity, meekness, the love of enemies; and their conduct was so morally pure and exemplary, that they really deserved the name of Saints which was given to them. Christianity produces the same effects to-day in whole nations and individual persons; it renews the mind and heart of man and makes sinners saints.

3. Just as leaven seizes all the pulverized particles of flour, uniting, enlivening, raising, and making the mass good bread, so Chris-

tianity collected individual men into one living organism, and penetrating all human relations, institutions, and conditions, ennobled and sanctified them. Mark what I say, the Catholic Church is not an organization, she is a living organism and has the germ of life inherent in herself. I shall mention only a few of the effects of this Christian leaven. In the Pagan states the princes were despots, who governed arbitrarily and whose subjects obeyed from slavish fear and self-interest. The laws were destitute of a moral basis. The student of history sometimes loves to dwell with intellectual delight upon the great erudition and sagacity displayed in the character of Roman jurisprudence. To make an elaborate and philosophic disquisition upon the origin of civil law and to enter into a recital of the defects of the many systems, would require an able pen, deep research, and far exceed our present limits. Suffice it to say, everything had accumulated around ancient jurisprudence in one mass of chaos. Punishment was not proportioned to the offense. There were no institutions in which the man of moderate means could acquire an education, or where the poor could receive succor and relief, or the sick nursing.

How different is it in Christian states, especially where the spirit of Christianity prevails! There the princes rule like fathers, the subjects obey like children, the laws are an emanation of the Divine Law, and have the welfare of the subjects for their object. There are numberless benevolent institutions and societies for the alleviation of human misery and the promotion of the common good. Let us cast a glance at the family life. As long as Paganism prevailed, man possessed unlimited authority in the house, the woman had no right in opposition to man; she could be maltreated, abused, and dismissed; parents were allowed to expose and kill their children; servants were slaves, who were not held as human beings, but as chattels, with which their owners could do as they pleased. How different is it in Christian family life. The bond of holy love twines around husband and wife, the man commands in love, the woman obeys lovingly; parents consider their children as images of God, and educate them for heaven; servants are members of the family and are treated like the children of the house. Christianity originated and fostered these sanctifying and ennobling effects in all the conditions of life; it banished Pagan rudeness and cruelty, softened manners, encouraged art and science, removed from entertainments everything indecent and obnoxious, and ameliorated all the circumstances of life. If in our days these beneficent influences of Christianity are to a great extent missed from society, it is only because the true Christian spirit is growing rare among men. The leaven can not produce a complete fermentation if it do not penetrate the whole mass of flour.

## PART II.

*The parables of the grain of mustard-seed and of the leaven teach us:*

1. That the Church of Christ is a work of God. This is evident from the following facts:

(a.) Jesus, the Founder of the Church, lived in poverty and lowliness, was despised and persecuted all his lifetime by the great majority of the Jews, and finally died as a malefactor on the cross. And behold! to this Jesus, the Crucified, who was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and a folly to the Gentiles, millions and millions of Jews and Gentiles are converted, profess him the Son of God, and adore him. Is not this wonderful?

(b) Twelve Apostles, men without any authority or science, went forth into the world and preached the Gospel of this same Jesus; they accepted the challenges of the most renowned, learned men, and overcame them in logical arguments. The doctrine of the Cross triumphed over all the wisdom of the world. Is not this wonderful?

(c.) Jews and Gentiles resisted the propagation of Christianity with all their power. Persecution raged against the Christians for centuries, and streams of blood flowed: but Christianity could not be extirpated, it gained continually new additions, and finally conquered all its enemies. Is this not more wonderful?

(d.) The Church even to-day makes demands on men, which are in direct opposition to their deeply-rooted habits, views, manners, inclinations, and passions; they are required to mortify their sinful desires, to deny themselves, to carry their cross daily, to renounce pride, impurity, avarice, desire of revenge, and all enmity; to live humbly, chastely, to give alms to the poor, to forgive their enemies and offenders from their hearts, to return good for evil; they are not to seek the things of earth, the things dear to and appreciated by the world, but the things that are above. And the Jews and Gentiles, who heretofore had no idea or conception of these doctrines, embrace them and make them the rule of their life. Is this not wonderful? So the Church in her foundation and propagation is evidently the work of God.

2. That, in the spiritual life, we should esteem nothing lightly, however trivial and insignificant it may appear.

(a.) We should esteem no good thought, word, or work lightly, because that seemingly trifling good may be the seed of another and a

greater, which, in its turn, becomes the seed of a greater still, etc., etc. Each good act brings to the soul an increase of grace, and a consequent stronger inclination to good, as well as a greater facility to practice virtue and perform good works. Thus each little act of virtue may be the first, or a connecting and necessary link in a long chain of good works, stretching away over our whole lives, and ending in a peaceful and happy death. Hence, we should never slight the performance of any little good deed, nor neglect any, even the most trifling, of our religious duties. We know not how much, in God's Providence, may depend on these little things. We are eager enough to make or save an easy dollar for our worldly well-being. If we only ponder the thing well, and view it as the Saints viewed it, we shall be, and with good reason, much more eager to make or save an easy dollar for our spiritual well-being. In this matter of little good works,—little mustard-seeds of the future,—we must be industrious. We must gather up and save up all we can. It is an old maxim, "Take care of the cents, and the dollars will take care of themselves." The dollar can not exist without the cent. He who neglects little exercises of virtue, shall never arrive at higher virtue and perfection. Only a very few of us, if any, shall be ever called upon to practice heroic acts of virtue. Our way to heaven lies not in that direction. Ours is easier, the humbler, the safer way that leads thither through the faithful performance of the ordinary duties of our state of life, and the practice of those little acts of virtue therewith connected. These we must endeavor to practice, otherwise we shall one day appear before God empty-handed. As cents gathered daily will after many years amount to a large sum, so we acquire by the practice of little virtues every day till death a great treasure before God with which we can purchase life everlasting. The consequences in the spiritual life, which may result from seeming trifles, can not be better illustrated than it is in the life of the great St. Ignatius. By reading the lives of Christ and the Saints, Ignatius from a worldly man became a great Saint and the founder of an Order.

(b.) And the lesson gathered from the parable of the mustard-seed as to the importance of good actions, small as they may be in themselves, is equally applicable to those so-called little sins and negligences to which so many foolishly pay only slight attention. No sin is little. One may be less than another, but while we understand sin to be an offense given to the eternal Creator, such a thing can never be little in itself. Consequently, if we even do speak of sins as little, it is not because they are to be reputed such in themselves, but only such by comparison with others. And as from one little act of virtue may ensue a series of acts, growing each one greater and greater as the series is continued, so from even a single one of those little sins may

ensue a series of sins and crimes, growing heinous and more heinous till they end in a bad death. Small faults often repeated finally become large sins, and unless they be repented of, draw a long punishment in hell after them. Yes, small faults, which are lightly committed, frequently lead to mortal sins, which may draw eternal damnation after them. "He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little."—*Ecc.* 19: 1. An envious thought, which Cain did not suppress, made him a fratricide: an unguarded look at Bethsabee led David to the commission of murder and adultery; a little avarice made Judas the Apostle a traitor to the Lord and a suicide. Oh, how many are among us who must own to a sinful thought, which they did not banish at once; a careless glance of the eye, which they allowed themselves; a sensual inclination to a person, which they harbored in their heart; in fine, little things have always been the cause of many and grievous sins.

## PERORATION.

The fruit of our meditation to-day should be, first, to consider it the greatest grace, that you are members of the Catholic Church; for she is, as her foundation and propagation testify, the work of God; believe then what she teaches, do what she commands. Secondly, to consider all things important that concern our salvation. Avoid carefully every, even the smallest, fault; and if, from human frailty, you commit a fault, be sorry for it from your heart, ask God's forgiveness, and promise amendment. Make use of the opportunity of practicing little virtues and good works. By so doing you may securely hope that, with the two good and faithful servants who were faithful over little things, you shall enter into the joy of your Lord.—*Matt.* 25: 21. Amen.

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 SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

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 3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

## THE CATHOLICITY OF THE CHURCH.

*"The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed and to leaven."*—*Matt.* 13: 31, 33.

Both parables of the gospel for this day have reference to the Church of Jesus Christ. The grain of mustard-seed is one of the smallest of



seeds, but, sowed in the earth, its germ buds, grows, and it becomes a tall tree. So the Church was small in the beginning, and numbered only a few members, but by little and little she spread in every direction, supplanting Judaism and Paganism and receiving almost all the nations of the earth into her bosom. A little leaven penetrates a great mass of flour, causes fermentation, and makes palatable bread. The Church of Christ also produced a fermentation in the minds of mankind, and renewed their hearts, so as to cause them to give up their worldly and sinful life and to serve God with fervor and devotedness.

Now the question is: 'Which is this Church of Christ, to which these two parables apply? It is no other than the Holy Catholic Church, for she alone possesses the marks of the Church established by Christ. Of two of these marks, Unity and Sanctity, I have spoken on the last two Sundays; to-day, I shall speak on the third—namely, the Catholicity or Universality of the Church, and show you,

- I. That the Church of Christ must be catholic, or universal;*
- II. That the Catholic Church is really catholic, or universal;*
- III. That all the other denominations are destitute of this mark; from which it follows that the Catholic Church alone is the true Church of Christ.*

## PART II.

The Church of Christ must be catholic or universal, both as to time and place.

*I. As to time.* She must exist in one unbroken, uninterrupted span from the time of Christ and his Apostles to this very day, nay, "even to the consummation of the world." Her universality must embrace, as it were, in a unit the three divisions of time—namely, the present, the past, and the future. From the days of Christ and the Apostles there must be no period in the past in which the student of history can pause, place his finger, and say: There, I can not find the Church of Christ. And this is evident from her destiny. Christ established his Church in order that the people of all times should find eternal salvation in her. His Church he left to mankind as the fruit of his precious blood, as the means of attaining that salvation which he merited for them by his life and sufferings and death. Her he left upon earth to carry on the work which he only inaugurated, of preaching to and teaching the world. "Go forth," said he when commissioning the Apostles, "go forth and teach all nations." To no others was such a commission given. The only ones so authorized were Peter and his companions. The only organization instituted by the Redeemer or recognized in any way by him was that of which Peter was constituted

the head, and of which Peter's successors were for all time to be the heads—manifestly the Catholic Church. She is the only institution of salvation for men, and whoever does not belong to her, at least to her soul, can not be saved. Now, since God wills all men to be saved, the Church of Christ must necessarily continue to exist without any interruption; for if she perished, or if there were any breach in the continuity of her existence, any period of time in which she did not exist, there would be a generation or generations of men deprived of their only means of salvation, and God himself would be the cause of their eternal perdition: to entertain any such thought for a moment would be simple blasphemy. For this reason Christ promised and repeatedly assured the permanent duration of his Church.—*Matt.* 16: 18, 28: 20. From this it evidently follows, that a religious society which did not always exist from the time of Christ, but came into existence in the lapse of time, can not be the true Church of Christ.

2. *As to place.* She must be found propagated in all parts of the world, and so constituted as to suit all climes, from the ice-bound regions of the North to where the luxuriant foliage of the tropics droops into the warm seas. This universality of place is a necessary corollary of her destiny. As she is the only institution established by Christ for the salvation of mankind, she must meet men's wants, and accompany them in all their peregrinations on the face of the earth, staying with them wherever they may think it expedient to dwell, that all may be able to enter her portals and as her members arrive at sanctity and salvation. Christ himself gives an assurance of this universality when he says to the Apostles and their successors: Go ye into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.—*Mark* 16: 15. Also, when he foretells to them that "they shall be witnesses unto him in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth."—*Acts* 1: 8. Therefore, a religious society that is confined within the limits of a particular nation or nations, and has not this universality of place, can not be the true Church of Christ.

## PART II.

The Catholic Church is really catholic, or universal,

1. *As to time.* She has existed from the time of Christ and the Apostles to this very day, and shall so exist to the consummation of the world, when time shall be no more. The very etymology of the word "Catholic" beautifully indicates this, for it means universal.

All the other religious denominations, coming into existence in the course of time, have particular names, and are generally called after their founders. But the Catholic Church was never called anything

but Catholic. She was known by this name everywhere, even in the most ancient times, and that name she retains to this very day, and shall retain to the end of time.

She has an unbroken, uninterrupted, golden chain of Pontiffs. Leo XIII. succeeds Pius IX.; Pius IX. succeeds Gregory XVI., and so on back through the long centuries till we come to Peter, who received his commission directly from Christ at the Last Supper, in the year A. D. 33.—*Luke 22: 31; Matt. 16: 18.* If in the midst of his deep research and learned disquisitions the student of history will pause, we can tell him who was Pope at the time of which he speaks, as very little time intervened between the death of a Pontiff and the election of his successor. And as the Catholic Church, as I remarked before, is not merely an organization, but a living organism, having the germ of life inherent in herself, a few years of interregnum will not destroy the chain of succession. Hence St. Augustine says: "We must hold firm to the Christian religion and the communion of that Church which is catholic, and which is also called Catholic not only by her own members, but even by her enemies." For even heretics and the adherents of schism, when speaking among themselves or with others not belonging to their society, are somehow forced will-they nil-they to speak of her as the Catholic Church. For if they would not call her by that name which the whole world gives her, they should be misunderstood. The Catholic Church, therefore, evidently is the true Church of Christ, for if she had ever fallen away, she would certainly have received some other designation. Our adversaries, a few of whom have been silly enough, or so ignorant of history, as to deny this Catholicity of the Catholic Church as regards time, though always challenged to name the date after Christ at which the Catholic Church came into existence, have not answered the question to this very day, and we repeat the challenge, knowing that they never can. It is absolutely impossible; for as far as we may go back into the Christian centuries, we always find the Catholic Church. It was on the feast of Pentecost that the grain of mustard-seed began to bud, and now its mighty trunk fills the world. The Catholic Church, therefore, is universal as to time; but she is also universal,

2. *As to place.* Of all Christian denominations, there is not a single one spread far and wide, North, South, East, and West, the world over, but the one known as the Catholic Church. Nor will any of them even pretend to compare with that Church in the number of their adherents. In Europe alone she numbers one hundred and twenty millions of souls, whilst all the Protestant denominations taken together number only about fifty-four millions. It has been estimated by careful statisticians that there are about two hundred and fifty

millions of Catholics on the globe, the Protestants amounting to about seventy millions. The Catholic Church, too, is spread all over the world. There is no country in which she has not her faithful children and in which she is not continually growing. Verily, the Catholic Church does resemble the grain of mustard-seed, which by degrees becomes a mighty tree and in the branches of which the birds of the air may rest their weary wings. The Church, therefore, with justice calls herself Catholic, for she has existed in all times from Christ, she is spread over all the earth, and the number of her children increases every year. And even if it should happen towards the end of the world, that whole countries should fall away from the Catholic faith, the Church nevertheless would not even then cease to be the Universal, or Catholic Church. For, according to the express declarations of the Sacred Scriptures, *Matt.* 8: 19, and 24: 14, and *Rom* 11: 25, it is by no means required that the Church, in order to prove her universality of time and place, should embrace all countries at all times. Just as the sun rises in the East, and gradually progressing, illuminates little by little the nations of the far distant West, yet never in such a manner as to shine upon more than half the globe at the same time, so the Catholic Church, rising in distant Judea, began soon to cast the vital heat of her grace and the pure pencil rays of her doctrine on all the inhabitants of the Old World. When our own Catholic Columbus discovered the New World the first thing he did was to plant the cross. Thanks be to God ! she is shining with undimmed splendor here to-day. But if, on account of the sins of the people of some particular countries, her light has been there extinguished, or the warmth of her graces have grown cold, it nevertheless remains true that she illuminated and vivified them, and she will bring them grace and salvation yet, if she be only permitted, and they be found worthy in the sight of God. Thus, in any imaginable case, the Church remains Catholic, or Universal.

### PART III.

All religious denominations separated from the Catholic Church are destitute of the mark of catholicity, or universality. They are not universal,

1. *As to time*, for they have not always been, from the time of Christ. It is indeed true, that in the early ages of Christianity there were men who held doctrines which the founders of various religious societies of later times have also held and taught. But those men were, as denounced by the whole Church in their own day, blasphemers and heretics, men from whom none of our modern religious denominations would own that they derive their origin. The present religious parties,

however, can not even derive their origin from those heretics, because they do not agree with them in all, but only in a few points. Just as a Protestant is not a Catholic because he receives a few doctrines of the Catholic Church, so the heretics of former centuries were not Protestants because they agreed with these latter on some points; for one can belong to a religious society only when he professes its whole doctrine. But, as Church history proves, there never has been a sect the doctrines of which agreed completely with those of any other denomination separated from the Catholic Church; these new religious societies are, therefore, not a day older than their founders, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin. They are, therefore, destitute of the mark of universality as to time; their doctrine is new; their society is new; they can, therefore, not be the Church of Christ, because this could not perish or lie buried, as it were, for more than a thousand years under the rubbish of heresies and schisms.

2. *As to place.* As already remarked, all the Protestant denominations together have only about seventy millions of members, while the Catholic Church numbers about two hundred and fifty millions. They are not spread like the Catholic Church,—no, not even in Europe. There are whole countries in which there is not one Protestant congregation. For this reason alone, if none other, they can not claim the mark of universality. Neither can they ever become universal, that is, spread in all countries; their principal doctrine prevents this—namely, that the Bible is the only rule of faith. According to this doctrine, every one who wishes to be saved must search the Scriptures. But how many Pagan nations are there, where such a thing as reading or literature, even in the most elementary form, is unknown? For them, according to the Protestant theory, the way to faith is barred. Moreover, the Sacred Scripture, if one wishes to draw his faith from it, must not only be read, but also rightly understood and interpreted. Now, among a thousand persons there is scarcely one who can interpret it rightly, nay, in reality no one, not even the most learned, can be always certain that his interpretation is the true and right one. Thus it is impossible for Protestantism, according to its chief doctrine, to become the common property of all men. Hence, we see that Protestants, although the work of the propagation of their faith is munificently supported, can effect nothing among Pagan nations. A single Catholic missionary who possesses nothing on his journey but the courage inspired by faith, converts more Pagans than a hundred Protestant missionary societies. These societies, instead of sending God-devoted men to preach the divine word orally to those who “sit in darkness and the shadow of death,” are content with sending tons of bibles to be scattered broadcast among the poor benighted unbe-

lievers. The office of Protestant missionary to the heathen is the most pitiable and contemptible that can well be imagined. His duties may be summed up in saying, that he has to see that his salary come regularly from the home society, for the maintenance of himself and his wife and children; that his consignment of bibles be in due time received and disposed of; and finally that, out of some little shadowy material, he make up some rose-colored letters for publication at home and distribution among the contributors to the funds of the society. No wonder that the labors (!) of Protestant missionaries have been so so sterile. In this field Protestants recognize their impotence themselves, and do not care much for the conversion of Pagans, but turn their attention and activity towards people who are already Christians, and with the zeal, and in the spirit of politicians, try to win them over to their side. Even in this their success is microscopic, and however painful to zealous Protestants the reflection, it remains an ugly but stubborn fact, staring them in the face, that a pious Catholic never becomes a Protestant, but that many pious Protestants become Catholics. But let us for a moment suppose that the Protestant denominations were spread over the whole earth, and the number of their adherents surpassed that of the Catholic Church, they could not even so be called *universal*, because they lack the mark of *Unity*. They constitute not *one whole* body, not *one* Church, for they have not all the same faith, nor do they admit the same means of grace, or acknowledge any one common head. They are independent of each other, and resemble independent states, which are united only by a common interest.

It is an incontrovertible truth that the Protestant denominations and the other religious parties separated from the Catholic Church do not possess the mark of universality as to time and place; they *were* not always, nor *are* they everywhere. They are not, therefore, the true Church established by Christ, but the Catholic Church is, which is *not only called* the Catholic or universal Church, but *really is* the Holy Roman CATHOLIC Church.

#### PERORATION.

Take to heart the words of St. Augustine: "Outside the Church man can have everything, except salvation." He can have honors, he can pray and sing, he can have the gospel (spell it with a small "g"), and preach it in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; he can have the sacrament (with Webster's little "s"), but he can find salvation nowhere except in the Catholic Church. Thank God, then, daily, that without any merit of yours, he has called you to the knowledge of the true Church. You know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. Remain loyal to your Catholic faith,

and live up to it. If you do, you may rest assured that you shall obtain life everlasting. Amen.

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## SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

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# 4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

## THE FEAST-DAYS OF THE CHURCH.

*"The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed and to leaven."*—  
Matthew 13: 31, 33.

Both parables of the gospel for this day refer to the Church of Christ. The parable of the grain of mustard-seed indicates the small beginning of the Church, and its gradual propagation over the whole earth; the parable of the leaven symbolizes the wonderful effects which the Church produced in the human family. As leaven penetrates the flour, and makes the bread good, so the Church changes man by purifying him and sanctifying him. The means she makes use of for this purpose are the word of God, the holy Sacrifice, and the Sacraments. These three means, the word of God, or instruction, the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and the administration of the Sacraments, are employed Sunday after Sunday for our sanctification. But, in addition to the ordinary Sunday ministrations, there is an extraordinary series—the round of festivals which the Church celebrates during the year. By means of these she not only increases her ministrations in our behalf, but further keeps before our minds at all seasons of the year one or other of the great mysteries of our holy religion. As festival after festival recurs, our celebration of them brings vividly before our minds all the prominent circumstances in our Blessed Lord's life, and death, and resurrection, and, in commemorating the mysteries of the Immaculate Conception, the virginal maternity, the glorious Assumption and Coronation of our Mother and our Queen, as well as the virtues of the Patriarchs, the sanctity of the Baptist and St. Joseph, the zeal of the Apostles, the endurance and triumph of the martyrs, and the holiness of that unnumbered host who are crowned and with God to-day in the kingdom of his glory, we are unconsciously meditating on the goodness and the mercy of our God, for truly "God is wonderful in his Saints." These festivals, and the reflections they give rise to, beckon us to higher things and encourage us to keep bravely on in the work of saving our immortal souls, to bear our

burdens with resignation, if not with joy, during "just the little while" of this life, knowing that it behooves us, as it behooved even Christ and his Saints, to suffer and so to enter into glory. These festivals, then, shall be the topic of our remarks to-day, and we shall consider,

- I. *What festivals the Church celebrates,*
- II. *How she celebrates them.*

## PART I.

### The Church celebrates—

1. *The feasts of the Lord*, which have for their object some mystery connected with the work of our Redemption. The Church celebrates no particular feast in honor of the Father, the First Person of the Blessed Trinity, because this Person has not, like the other two, revealed himself to men in a visible form. But in his honor Advent is celebrated, the fundamental idea of which is: "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting."—*John* 3: 16. Most of the feasts of the Lord refer to God the Son, because it was he that assumed human nature, and redeemed us by his sufferings and death.

Among the feasts of the Lord there are three principal ones, each of which forms the centre of a cycle of secondary feasts, viz: *Christmas*, *Easter*, and *Pentecost*. These three feasts form, as it were, the central sun, around which all the secondary feasts are clustered in harmonious constellations, deriving their illumination and the completeness of their mysteries from them. The holidays of obligation which occur in the Christmas cycle are the *Circumcision* and the *Epiphany of our Lord*, which disclose to us the truth that Jesus, the new-born Redeemer, is to accomplish, by the effusion of his blood, the Redemption, not only of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles. In the Easter cycle occurs the feast of *the Ascension of Christ*, which is the completion of the state of glorification into which he had entered by his Resurrection. In the Pentecost cycle we have the feasts of the *Most Holy Trinity*, and of *Corpus Christi*. Pentecost concludes the three principal feasts of the Ecclesiastical year, and lays the truth before our eyes, that in the work of our Redemption three Divine Persons coöperated: and the feast of *Corpus Christi*, which can not be celebrated as a feast of joy on Holy Thursday, is postponed to the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, and represents to us the truth, that the Blessed Eucharist, as a Sacrifice and Sacrament, is the holiest treasure of the Church and the source from which unceasingly grace and salvation flow to her.



2. *The feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary.* If we consider that Mary stood in much closer relation to the work of our Redemption, as Mother of God, than all the Saints, and that in dignity and sanctity she surpasses by far all angels and Saints, and is their Queen, we shall not be astonished that the Church celebrates in her honor more feasts than of the other saints. The principal feasts of Mary are five, of which three are holidays of obligation, namely: the *Immaculate Conception*, the *Nativity*, the *Annunciation*, the *Purification*, and the *Assumption*. Two of these feasts, the *Annunciation* and *Purification*, show us Mary as the *Mother of God*. The days of celebrating the Annunciation and the Purification are fixed in relation to the feast of Christmas, the 25th day of December. They are the feasts of Mary as Mother of God. The feast of the Annunciation reminds us of the day of grace on which Mary, by the power of the Holy Ghost, conceived the Son of God; it is the day of the Incarnation of Christ in the chaste womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Since the Nativity of our Lord is celebrated on the 25th day of December, the feast of his Incarnation, or the feast of the Annunciation, must be celebrated nine months earlier, that is, on the 25th day of March. In like manner the feast of Mary's Purification, or Candlemas day, must be celebrated on the 2d day of February, because from the birthday of our Lord, on the 25th day of December, to the 2d day of February is forty days, after the lapse of which Mary fulfilled the Mosaic law of the Purification. In the other three feasts Mary appears as the *Mother of men*, for which reason their celebration is not ordered with reference to the feasts of the Lord. The feasts of the Immaculate Conception and the Nativity of Mary stand in relation to each other, on which account the former is celebrated on the 8th day of December, and the latter nine months later, on the 8th day of September. Both these feasts make Mary appear to us as the Mother of men, since already her conception and birth announced grace and salvation to the world, wherefore the Church on both these feasts prays: Thy immaculate conception (nativity) has announced joy to the whole world. The feast of the Assumption (15th August) turns our eyes to Mary, since she, as Queen of heaven, with motherly affection, looks down upon us, her children, and is our advocate and intercessor with Jesus.

3. *The feasts of the Angels* The Church celebrates these feasts, because the angels are not only our friends and protectors, and confer on us many benefits in body and soul but also because they are in intimate connection with the work of our Redemption. Thus, Gabriel announced to Daniel the time when Christ would appear, and to the Blessed Virgin Mary that she had been chosen by God to become the Mother of his Son; an angel appeared to Joseph also at the birth of

Jesus, in the fields of Bethlehem. Five feasts of angels are celebrated every year: the feast of the Guardian Angels, two feasts of St. Michael, and the feast of the Archangels Gabriel and Raphael.

4. *The feasts of the Saints.* The Church celebrates daily the feast of one or more Saints, to induce us daily to venerate them, to ask their intercession, and to follow them in their examples of virtue. The day which is celebrated in their honor is generally the *day of their death*, for this is more appropriate than their birthday. At their corporeal birth the Saints were also contaminated by original sin, therefore not holy yet, neither had they given as yet any proofs of their sanctity; it was uncertain yet what road they would take, whether of virtue or of vice; they were to fight first and obtain the crown afterwards. On the day of their death they had been tried as soldiers of Christ, all danger of salvation ceased for them, they were born again to eternal life. For this reason the Church calls the day of their death their birthday. Hence, St. Peter Chrysologus says: "If you hear of the birthday of the Saints, do not think that it is the day on which they were born of the flesh for the earth, but the day of their transit from earth into heaven, from labor to rest, from temptations to victory, from sufferings to never-ending joys, from the vanities of the world to the crown of glory."

5. *The holy Martyrs* were the first whose feasts were celebrated in the Church. The day of their death was commemorated yearly with great solemnity by offering the Sacrifice of the Mass in their honor, by publishing their names, and by reading the history of their life and death. Only in the fourth century did they begin in the East to commemorate the feasts of Saints who were not martyrs.

The feasts of the Saints are nothing accidental in the Ecclesiastical year, but they constitute an essential part of it. The Church brings before our eyes the mysteries of our Redemption on the feasts of the Lord, and on the feasts of the Saints she shows us how they by their coöperation have applied to themselves the grace of Redemption, and exhorts us to their imitation, that we also, through Jesus Christ, may obtain salvation. At the same time she admonishes us to venerate the Saints and to invoke their intercession, that, through their merits and mediation, we may obtain greater graces for our salvation.

## PART II.

1. The Church celebrates all the feasts of the Lord and of the Saints, both in the mass and the breviary. In the mass she refers to these feasts in the Introit, in the prayers, in the Epistle and the Gospel; and in some feasts of the Lord, even in the preface and canon.

The same is to be said of the celebration of the feasts in the Breviary. The antiphons and psalms are always chosen with reference to the mystery or the Saint whose feast is celebrated; this is also the case with the lessons. The lessons of the second nocturn, in particular, contain a succinct biography of the Saint for the day.

By the celebration of the feasts in the mass and the Breviary, the Church induces us to meditate on the mystery of the feast or the life of the Saint, and to excite ourselves to salutary thoughts and resolutions. As the mass especially is in itself an effectual and salutary sacrifice, the Church, by connecting therewith all the feasts, enables us to celebrate these feasts worthily and profitably. If, for instance, on the feast of the Ascension of our Lord, we ask God to infuse into our hearts a heavenly disposition, we may confidently hope to obtain this grace, because the mass is a sacrifice of petition.

2. The Church celebrates some feasts with greater, others with less solemnity. Of course, the feasts of our Lord hold the first rank in point of solemnity; then follow in succession those of the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, the angels, apostles, martyrs, bishops, priests, and other confessors, virgins, and widows.

3. The Church has ordained a preparatory celebration for some feasts. To this class belong the three principal feasts of the year, Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. The preparation for Christmas is the time of Advent; for Easter, the Lenten season; for Pentecost, the ten days intervening between it and the feast of the Ascension. These three principal feasts and several others have also an after celebration for eight days, which is called the Octave.

#### PERORATION.

You have heard now what feasts the Church celebrates and how she celebrates them. Sanctify those that are of obligation, by abstaining from servile work, and by assisting at mass. Receive the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist, which will enable you to celebrate these feasts in the right spirit, and put into practice the holy resolutions which you make on those days, that you may become worthy to celebrate, with God and his elect, an everlasting holiday in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

## SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

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## 5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

## THE CHURCH A GRAIN OF MUSTARD-SEED.

*"The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed."—Matt. 13: 31.*

Many may wonder why Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a grain of mustard-seed and to leaven. Is the kingdom of heaven so little, so insignificant, as a grain of mustard-seed or a small quantity of leaven? No; the kingdom of heaven is great, indescribably beautiful and glorious, for there God manifests himself in all his glory and majesty, there the Angels and Saints triumph in everlasting joy. But you must know that it is not of that kingdom that Jesus speaks when he says: The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, or to leaven. The kingdom of heaven means here, the Church of Christ on earth. The Church is a kingdom, for it has everything that is required for a kingdom, officers and subjects, a constitution and laws, and within itself all means for its own existence and the obtaining of its end. She is a kingdom of heaven, for she is established not for the earth, but for heaven. Behold, this kingdom of heaven, the Church upon earth, our divine Saviour compares with a grain of mustard-seed and with leaven. Let us consider to-day how the Church resembles a grain of mustard-seed,

*I. In her origin,*

*II. In her propagation.*

## PART I.

The Church, a grain of mustard-seed in her origin. Jesus says of the grain of mustard-seed, that it is the least of all seeds. So it is in reality. It is so small that you can hold a thousand in your hand; it is little and insignificant. Little and insignificant was the Church in the beginning.

(I.) Little was *her founder*; how, the founder of the Church *little*? Is not Jesus Christ, her founder, the Son of God? Is he not God, as the Father and Holy Ghost? Is not all power given to him in heaven and on earth?—*Matt. 28: 18*. Is he not the King of kings, and the Lord of lords? "Has not God, his Father, given him a name which is above every other name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and in hell; and that every

tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father"—*Phil. 2: 9-12*. Yes, but Jesus wished to be little upon earth, little among men, like the grain of mustard-seed among other seeds. "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."—*Matt. 20: 28*. "He debased himself, taking the form of a servant, being made to the likeness of men, and in shape found as a man."—*Phil. 2: 7*. Little and lowly he was born, poor and lowly he lived, poor and lowly, in extreme contumely and forsaken by all, he died on the cross. So little does the founder of the Church appear.

(2.) Little, lowly, and contemptible in the eyes of the world was her doctrine. "We preach," says the Apostle, "Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles foolishness."—*I. Cor. 1: 23*. When Jesus declares himself the Son of God, Caiphas rends his garments, and full of indignation, exclaims: "He hath blasphemed," and the whole assembly said: "He is guilty of death."—*Matt. 26: 65, 66*. The Christian doctrine is to the Jews so odious and hateful that they thought they were doing a service to God by persecuting and killing the preachers of it.—*John 16: 2*. And how do the Gentiles judge of the Christian doctrines? They ridicule the Christians and call it the greatest nonsense that Christians adore a crucified man as their God, they find it incomprehensible that they should humble themselves, forgive their greatest enemies, return good for evil, rather give than take, despise temporal goods, and seek the things above. Such doctrines were diametrically opposed to their ideas and principles.

(3.) *Little were her teachers.* Jesus chose only twelve Apostles for his Church, who should propagate her over all the earth. What a small number! How shall twelve Apostles suffice to tear down the kingdom of error and sin, and to build up in its stead the kingdom of truth and virtue? And who are these Apostles? Great, learned men? Men of high social position? Kings and princes of the earth? No; they are common men, poor fishermen, men without learning, influence, or power. Truly, the Apostle was right in saying: "That not many are wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the strong; and the things that are not, that he might destroy the things that are."—*I. Cor. 1: 26, 28*.

(4.) *Little was the number of her members.* Jesus preached the Gospel for three years, and confirmed his doctrine by a most holy life, so that his greatest enemies could not convict him of a fault, he did good to all, performed numberless miracles, yet how few believed in

him! Out of ten thousand Jews, there was scarcely one converted; nearly all persevered in their unbelief. Even those who were converted and believed in him showed themselves weak and wavering in faith; when he was in the hands of his enemies and condemned to death his Apostles and disciples fled, and even Peter denied him. After Jesus had accomplished the whole work of the Redemption and had ascended gloriously into heaven, how did matters stand with his Church? Oh, she was little indeed! In one room, the Upper Chamber, there was place enough to hold all the members, for she numbered only about one hundred and twenty souls. Behold, so little is the Church in her origin, little indeed, like a grain of mustard-seed.

## PART II.

The Church, a grain of mustard-seed in her propagation. The grain of mustard-seed, though small, contains within it extraordinary vital power. Placed in the earth, it buds, gradually grows, and eventually becomes the greatest of all herbs. There is also an extraordinary, because divine, virtue in the Church. She is ever under the constant watchful power and protection of the Holy Ghost, who teaches, sanctifies strengthens, and guides her.

"I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you forever, the Spirit of Truth."—*John 14: 16, 17.* What and how the Holy Ghost operates in the Church, the first Christian Pentecost at Jerusalem tells us. Fortified with the spirit of light and of truth and of strength, the Apostles preach the Gospel, and many thousands in Judea and Samaria are converted to belief in Jesus Christ. In Jerusalem, in Samaria, and many other cities, Christian congregations are formed. The grain of mustard-seed of the Church springs up and becomes great like a tree.

2. When the grain of mustard-seed grows up, it shoots forth its branches, which spread out in every direction. Is it otherwise with the Church? Was she not in a short time spread over all the countries of the earth? It was granted already to St. John, who died at Ephesus, in the year 101, to see the Church of his dear Master propagated over the three then known continents. Governor Pliny, the Younger, reports to the Emperor Trajan, in the year 106, that this superstition (being a Gentile, he so calls the Christian religion), has taken a foothold not only in cities, but that it has crept into villages and villas, and that the temples of the gods are left empty. Tertullian, in the second century, says to the Gentiles: "We are only of yesterday, and yet we fill all places—your cities, your towns, your fields, the palace, the senate, and the judiciary—we leave you nothing but your temples."

After the mustard-seed of Christianity had grown and become a

great tree, great tempests and persecutions overtook the Church in her onward career; a three hundred years' persecution broke out, many Roman emperors one after the other issued bloody edicts, and swore by their gods not to desist from these persecutions till the last of the Christians be exterminated. All that the malignant genius of cruelty could invent was employed to torment the Christians even to death. Their blood flowed in streams, and about thirty millions obtained the palm of martyrdom.

But the virtue of the Holy Ghost who dwelt in the Church was so great, so wonderful, that during the long and cruel persecutions she not only suffered no loss, but even grew stronger every day, and was propagated still farther. The blood of martyrs was the seed of Christians. After the lapse of 300 years, the Church had conquered the world. So the word of the Lord was fulfilled. "From the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation."—*Malach. 1: 11.*

3. *When it is grown up and becomes a tree, the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof.* The birds of the air are the Jews and the Gentiles who entered into the Church. Oxen and sheep do not climb trees and dwell in their branches, only the birds, which are more in the air than upon the earth, seek a dwelling in the trees; only such as aspire to the supernatural and eternal, and are of good will, enter the Church; persons who are absorbed in temporal things remain far off from the Church. Our Lord teaches this truth in the parable of the great supper.—*Luke 14: 16, etc.* It was always so, and it is so to-day. The great majority of the Jews did not become Christians. And why not? Because they were too sensual and carnal. They longed only for a Saviour that would free them from the yoke of the Romans and make them a strong and prosperous people. Jesus, who preached humility, mortification of the flesh, contempt of the world, found no favor in their eyes. There are many in our days who are convinced of the truth of the Catholic faith, but they do not embrace it, because their heart clings to the world. Yes, this total absorption in temporal and sensual things is the reason why even some who are children of the Catholic Church from their birth apostatize from her. Pride, avarice, and sensuality caused the great defection from the Church in the sixteenth century. It is the same passions and vices that in our days drive many who were Catholics into unbelief and heresy. Therefore the Lord says: "Every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved."—*John 3: 20.* In like manner, St. Paul says: "Some rejecting a good conscience, have made shipwreck concerning the faith."—*1. Tim. 1: 19.*

## PERORATION.

Now you understand how the Church resembles a grain of mustard-seed. Endeavor that, as members of the Church, you also resemble the grain of mustard-seed. As the mustard-seed grows and becomes a tall tree, so you must also grow in the Christian virtues and become like a cedar of Lebanon, great before God. "Increase in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."—*II. Pet.* 3: 18. Work daily at your perfection by correcting your faults, by extirpating your inordinate inclinations more and more, by fulfilling punctually the duties of your religion and state of life, by practicing more fervently the Christian virtues and making use of the means of salvation. A tree that grows no more, becomes dry and fit only for the fire. A Christian who makes no progress in the spiritual life, and does not increase in grace, dies to God and grace, and has reason to fear the fire of hell. The slothful servant.—*Matt* 25: 24, 25. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."—*I. Cor.* 15: 58. Amen.

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SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

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6. MORAL SKETCH.

## SINS WHICH MANY PEOPLE MISTAKE FOR TRIVIAL.

\* *Which, indeed, is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown up, it is greater than any herbs.*"—*Matt.* 13: 32.

A grain of mustard-seed, a little leaven mixed with flour, are apparently something quite insignificant. If we did not know by experience what their effects are, we should be led to disregard them. So in the moral life there are some things which by many are looked upon as little—nay, as nothing—which, however, are of the greatest importance. Such are a great many sins. One allows himself to be deluded by his passions, or the example of others, and considers things which are very sinful, either as no sins at all, or at most only small defects, hardly worthy of notice. The consequence of which is, that such Christians, in their unhappy delusion, heap sins upon sins, and perhaps only in eternity shall they open their eyes, when it will be too late and no rescue possible.



*What are the sins that so many Christians disregard? They are—*

1. *The sins of the heart.* These sins are bad thoughts and desires which are entertained voluntarily and with pleasure. He who represents to himself unchaste objects, and takes pleasure in the mental contemplation thereof, sins by bad thoughts. He who not only represents to himself something bad, but also desires to see, to hear, or to do it, sins by bad desires.

Now, there are many Christians who commit such sins of the heart very frequently without any disquietude. They have, for instance, vain, proud, revengeful, avaricious, envious, unchaste thoughts and desires, entertain them with pleasure, and take no pains to banish them, imagining such thoughts and desires to be of no consequence, to be either no sins at all, or only trivial, venial ones. What a pernicious error! God looks far more to the will than to the deed. If exteriorly you lead the life of a saint, but have a corrupt heart, God abhors you, and according to the word of Jesus, you resemble "whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness."—*Matt. 23: 27*. With God the will goes for the deed. When entertained deliberately and voluntarily in some important matter, bad thoughts and desires are, like bad deeds, mortal sins. Therefore it is said in the *Book of Proverbs*, 15: 26: 'Evil thoughts are an abomination to the Lord,' and Christ himself says: "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart."—*Matt. 5: 28*. The rebellious angels were damned forever for entertaining only for an instant a thought of pride. How great will be the number of those who, disregarding the evil thoughts and desires of the heart, and who neglecting to confess and amend, shall perish on account of these sins.

2. *The sins of omission.* We sin by omission when, through our own fault, and without a valid excuse, we neglect to perform a religious duty. This kind of sin, too, is very frequent. Many neglect the duties of religion; they are careless in the business of their salvation, they pray but little and ill, all their thoughts and affections are set upon worldly things, and they give themselves to the distractions of a worldly life. Of God, of their soul, and eternity they seldom think. They find no relish in spiritual reading, they put off the reception of the Sacraments till Easter,—in fine, they neglect in many ways their religious duties, or fulfil them imperfectly and badly. Many Christians neglect the duties of their station in life. How great is the number of parents who, in the education of their children, are guilty of many omissions. They do not earnestly see to it, that their children say their morning and evening prayers, attend mass on Sundays, and receive the

Sacraments; they permit them to dress extravagantly, to be out at unreasonable hours, to entertain bad company, to be too familiar with persons of the opposite sex, and to engage in immodest discourses and sinful pleasures. How many children are self-willed, stubborn, disobedient? These and many other sins of omission are little thought of, and are committed again and again without any disquietude of conscience, or without persons accusing themselves of them. We have an example in Heli, who neglected his duty as father towards his degenerate sons, even after God by his prophet had threatened him with the severest chastisement.—*I. Kings* 3. Some spiritual writers maintain that more people shall be damned for sins of omission than for sins of commission.

3. *The sins against justice and charity.* Justice requires that we give and leave to every one his own, that we take no advantage of any one, that we do not cheat, steal, nor injure any one in his property. Whoever has sinned, be it in whatever way, against justice, is bound to restitution and to repair the damage, otherwise he shall receive no forgiveness from God. Charity obliges us to assist the poor and needy, and to succor them as far as we can. How many sins against justice and charity are committed! Who can count all the injustices which are committed in business transactions, in commerce, and in trade? Goods are adulterated and sold as genuine; serious defects in merchandise are concealed, and the buyer is cheated; the highest price is asked for goods; the charges for work done are exorbitant, and people live quietly as if everything was in order. If their conscience is sometimes aroused, or if, from the pulpit or in the confessional, attention is called to these injustices, they quiet themselves with the thought: That can not be wrong; how could man get along; others are doing the same! Not a few acknowledge their injustices, but they will not be convinced of the necessity of repairing them according to their ability. They think they can shirk the duty of restitution and the reparation of damages by saying that the performance of this duty is impossible for them, and yet it would be possible, if they had the will; or they say that they will give some alms or contribute something for a charitable purpose. But they greatly deceive themselves. Injustice remains injustice, whether few or many are guilty of it, and every injustice must be repaired, otherwise no forgiveness of the sin can be hoped for.—*Matt.* 5 26.

As many sin against justice, so do they against charity. Like that priest and Levite who left the half-dead man helplessly by the roadside, they have no commiseration for their neighbor, and do not assist him, although without any sacrifice they could help him; nay, frequently they take advantage of his necessity, buying at their own figure what

hard necessity compels him to sell, taking usurious interest, and charging two prices for what a neighbor is in urgent need of. Their way of acting may appear right in their own eyes, in the eyes of God it is not. "Judgment without mercy, to him that hath not done mercy."—*St. James* 2: 13. Sentence of the divine Judge on the unmerciful.—*Matt.* 25: 41, *etc.*

4. *The profaning of the Sundays and holidays.* Sundays and holidays are to be sanctified by abstaining from servile work, by assisting at mass and the afternoon service, and by pious exercises and good works. But in how many ways do not people act against these divine and ecclesiastical ordinances? And some who do not keep holy the Sundays and holidays, but neglect their duties on those days, are not in the least troubled or disquieted in their conscience: they do not accuse themselves in the confessional of this neglect, but imagine that all is right, although God and the Church say that all is wrong. And why? Because they see others doing the same, taking the blind for their guides. Among the Israelites the desecration of the Sabbath had become general, and hardly any one considered this desecration a sin. But the Lord said: "They grievously violated my Sabbaths: I said, therefore, that I would pour out my indignation upon them in the desert and would consume them."—*Ezech* 20: 13. On account of the desecration of the Sundays and holidays, many Christians shall die an unhappy death and perish eternally.

5. *Lastly, the sins which have no serious consequences, which cause no particular damage, or which even bring a temporal advantage.* Many consider that lying is permissible when it hurts no one. They take even false oaths, in order to do a favor to a friend and to extricate him from a predicament. Such false oaths, which are common in judicial transactions of assault and battery, in defrauding the government of the custom duties or internal revenue, and the state of taxes, are in the eyes of many not sinful, or at least excusable, because by them they do an act of charity to others. So they also judge of many other sins; if they cause no damage, but rather an advantage, they are not considered objectionable and punishable. Especially in our days actions are judged by their success, and however objectionable and bad they may be, they are approved of if they be successfully carried out. Men of cunning—so-called men of business—who trample human and divine rights under their feet, and who are not deterred from anything if it only serve their purpose, are overwhelmed with honor and praise for being successful in their undertakings and accomplishing what they take in hand. What a delusion! An immoral, bad action is and remains immoral and bad, whatever success it may have. God frequently educes good out of the worst actions. But it would be ridiculous to

attribute such good result, neither foreseen, wished, or intended, to the evil-doer. In a sense it may be said that Judas by his treason, Pilate by the condemnation of Jesus to death, and the Jews by his crucifixion, have done an immense deal of good to mankind, for they have caused the Redemption of the whole human race by the death of Jesus. But are they on that account without sin? What sane man would believe this? St. Augustine says: It is not lawful to tell a lie on any consideration, if thereby even the salvation of a man, nay, the salvation of the whole world, could be achieved. Henry VIII. of England wished to be separated from his lawful wife, Catherine of Aragon, in order to marry the Queen's maid of honor, Anne Boleyn. He applied to Pope Clement VII. to obtain from him the dissolution of the marriage with Catherine. As the marriage was valid, the Pope could not dissolve it without violating the divine law; he therefore resisted the desire of the King. The dissolute monarch, blinded by his vile passion, disregarded the Pope's refusal, repudiated the virtuous Catherine, and married Anne. Nor did he stop here. In his anger, he abolished the papal jurisdiction in England, and finding a pliant tool in a servile parliament, assumed to himself all-spiritual supremacy over the English Establishment (A. D. 1534.) He persecuted all those Catholics who would not acknowledge his unwarrantable assumption of spiritual power; many were put to death, among whom might be mentioned Bishop Fisher and Chancellor More. His conduct afterwards towards his wives is too shocking to narrate. Thus was English Protestantism conceived in lust and cradled in murder. Had the Pope been as pliant in these matters as Luther was to a certain German prince, he could have perhaps prevented all these evils. But he could and would not, for he knew that it is not lawful to do evil if thereby even the greatest evil could be averted or the greatest advantage obtained.

#### PERORATION.

Meditate seriously and see whether you have not suffered yourselves to be so deluded by inordinate self-love, or the bad example of the world, as not to acknowledge to be a sin what really is. If that should be the case, abandon this error, which would draw upon you the wrath of God and eternal damnation. In order not to go astray, hold to the doctrine of the holy Catholic Church, for she is infallible in whatever concerns faith and morals. If ever you be in doubt whether a thing is lawful or not, ask your pastor or confessor. They will give you the necessary information. Be conscientious in everything, that you may be able to give a good account of your stewardship on the day of judgment. Amen

## SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

## 7. MORAL SKETCH.

## VENIAL SINS A GREAT EVIL.

*"The grain of mustard-seed becomes a tree."—Matt. 13: 32.*

Little things become great, both in the moral and in the natural world. This is the important truth which Jesus Christ proposes to us in the two parables of the gospel for this day. Insignificant and little is the grain of mustard-seed, but in the course of time it becomes greater than other herbs, a tree in the branches of which the birds of the air dwell. Only a small quantity of leaven is necessary to put a mass of flour into fermentation. We must not disregard and despise what is little; be it ever so insignificant, it may become something great. The grain of mustard-seed is little, but it carries within it the germ of something great; a little leaven has the virtue of changing a tasteless mass of flour into palatable bread.

We may apply these two parables to venial sins. Many consider these sins as insignificant, because they are little, but they are not; on the contrary, they must be considered as something very important. Let us meditate on this truth to-day; I say: *venial sins are a great evil*,

- I. *In themselves,*
- II. *In their consequences.*

## PART I.

Venial sins are a great evil in themselves.

1. *Because they are an offense against God.* Every sin, even the least, is a disobedience to God, if not in great, at least in small things. No superior is indifferent when he sees that his inferiors do not obey him, although it be only in small things; he is offended. The reason is because the inferiors do not show him that respect and honor which is due him as their superior. God is our highest Lord. he can and he must demand of us the strictest obedience, otherwise he would cease to be our Lord, and consequently our God. If we should refuse him obedience in small things, we would assume to circumscribe his supreme dominion, and disregard his will; we would, if not in words, at least by our actions, say: "I know, O Lord, that the inordinate inclinations which I entertain in my heart, and the faults which I com-

mit, displease thee; nevertheless, I will not amend these inclinations and faults; I will do thy will in important affairs, but in things which do not signify much, and which thou hast not commanded under the threat of eternal damnation, thou needst not expect me to obey." I leave it to yourselves to judge if Christians who are so minded and who so act, do not violate the veneration due to God, and therefore offend him.

God is infinitely *holy*. He hates and detests every sin, even the least. In the days of Noah, God seeing the people had become degenerate and had not ceased to pile sin upon sin, said that: "It repented him that he had made man."—*Gen.* 6: 6. So much God hates sin, yes, so much God hates sin, that he sent his only begotten Son into the world, that he, as the Lamb of God, should take away the sins of the world.—*John* 1: 29. If we commit only a venial sin, must it not grievously offend the infinitely holy God?

God is *our greatest benefactor*, who can certainly demand of us to be grateful to him. But if, unmindful of his numberless benefits, we are cold towards him, and regard it not to act contrary to his holy will, be it even only in little things, must not such a coldness toward his goodness displease him?

2. *Because it could be blotted out only by the death of Jesus.* Let us suppose all men upon earth had committed only one venial sin, what should be done, in order to satisfy the divine justice for this sin, and to obtain its forgiveness? Would it suffice for all men to bewail this sin with many tears, to offer all their good works in satisfaction for it? nay, to shed even their blood? No: for even a venial sin is an offense against an Infinite Being, and will, consequently, demand a satisfaction of infinite value, which not all mankind together, as finite beings, can effect. If even all the angels of heaven should offer to God all their merits and prayers for one venial sin, nay, if they assumed human nature and were crucified like Christ, this sacrifice would be insufficient for the atonement of one venial sin, for the angels are finite beings, and therefore incapable of offering to God a sacrifice of infinite value. As for mortal sins, so for venial sins, Jesus Christ alone could make satisfaction. If he had not become man and died for us on the cross, venial sins, no more than mortal, could be forgiven us. And should we hold venial sins to be a small evil?

No, venial sin is also an evil with which no temporal evil can be compared: neither the loss of honor, nor sickness, nor death, nor any other evil, whatever name it may have, for all temporal evils refer only to creatures, but sin is directed against the Creator, whom it dishonors and offends. So the Saints judged. St. Anslem and St. Thomas of

Aquin have repeatedly declared that they would rather burn in hell in innocence, than triumph in heaven contaminated by one venial sin. St. Catherine of Genoa said to the Lord: "I refuse not that when I come to die, thou showest me all the evil spirits with their terror and pains, for these as compared with the sight of the least offense against thee I esteem as nothing." In reality there can be no offense small in itself, because the supreme Majesty is always offended.

## PART II.

The consequences of venial sin are bad, for

1. *It prevents many graces which God would otherwise give us:* Venial sin does this in various ways. It weakens, especially if deliberately and frequently committed, Christian fervor, and the result is that in the exercise of prayer, in the reception of the Sacraments, in the hearing of the word of God, one becomes guilty of many a carelessness, and for this reason does not receive as many graces as he would by greater fervor. It leads to lukewarmness, so that he neglects the good which he could do, or does it very imperfectly, which again draws a loss of graces after it. It turns the heart from God, so that he withholds his graces from us. Let us imagine a servant, who, in the first years of the service, is very zealous in the performance of his duties, but after a while becomes slothful, does indeed what he is strictly bound to do, but in less important things is not afraid to be disobedient and displeasing to his master. Will the master be as kind to him as he was in the beginning, when he served him with all fervor? Certainly not; in proportion as the zeal of the servant has decreased, the love of his master for him will decrease. Just so God will treat us men. If we love him above all things, and avoid even the least sin with the greatest care, God will give us his whole love and impart to us abundantly of his graces; but if we become lukewarm, and offend him frequently in small things, his love for us will decrease, and in consequence of it he will not give us the many graces which he gave us before.

2. It draws down upon us many punishments of God:

(a.) *In this world.* The Sacred Scriptures furnish us examples. When fleeing from the burning Cities of the Plain, *Lot's wife*, contrary to the command of the angel and out of mere curiosity, looked back. For this act of disobedience she was instantly turned into a pillar of salt.—*Gen. 19: 26.* *Mary*, the sister of Moses, was, on account of a little murmuring, infected with a terrible leprosy, from which she could be freed again only by the prayer of her brother.—*Num. 12.* A

little diffidence to which *Moses* gave way, when he undertook to educe water miraculously out of a hard rock, displeased the Lord so much that he never allowed him to enter the land of promise.—*Num.* 20. *Moses*, on this occasion, did not doubt the power and veracity of God, but displayed a little diffidence, for, fearing that the unworthiness of the people would be a barrier, he grasped his rod and said: "Hear, ye rebellious and incredulous, can we bring you forth water out of this rock?" He then struck the rock twice, whereas once would have been sufficient. *Moses* never entered the promised land, but died on a high eminence, God having only vouchsafed him a distant view of the long-promised land.

*The Levite Oza*, who put forth his hand to the ark of the covenant to hold it, when it was leaning in the cart in which it was being conveyed, fell dead before the ark of God.—*II. Kings* 6. Can venial sin be a little, insignificant thing, when God punishes it so severely on earth?

(b.) *In the other world.* If he who commits venial sins pass through this life unpunished, a severe chastisement will be meted out to him in the next if he has not fully satisfied the justice of God for them. Faith teaches us that all venial sins which are not satisfied for here, must be atoned for in purgatory. What kind of penance will that be? A very severe one, for the holy Fathers unanimously assure us that the sufferings of purgatory by far surpass all the pains and sufferings of this life. St. Augustine says of the fire of purgatory: "This fire, although it does not last forever, is painful in a wondrous manner, for it surpasses every pain which man has ever endured or can endure on earth." Now, if God, who is so loving and merciful towards man, yet punishes venial sins so severely, who could believe that venial sins are only trifles.

3. *By little and little it leads to mortal sins.* Christians who heedlessly commit venial sins, are manifestly in a state of lukewarmness, and this always leads to grievous sins. The reason is evident. The tepid man is not solicitous for his eternal welfare, he pays no attention to the temptations by which he is frequently assailed, he practices no mortification and self-denial, he is careless and negligent in prayer and the use of the means of grace; how easy is it under such circumstances for him to fall into mortal sin, especially when God, on account of his lukewarmness, imparts to him his graces more sparingly! Hence we read: "He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little."—*Eccles.* 19. 1. Gregory the Great says: "If by habit we become acquainted with venial sins, we shall afterwards not be afraid of falling into great ones." St. Chrysostom assures us that he had known many



who appeared as if they were adorned with great virtues, but not regarding small faults, they fell into the abyss of vices. This sad truth is corroborated in the fall of our first parents. What was the cause for this fall? Only insignificant faults. It was only through a little imprudence and inconsiderateness, that Eve one day went near the tree of knowledge. This fault was succeeded by another, an unguarded glance at the fruit of the tree; the conversation into which the guileless woman entered with the serpent, was the third fault. Vanity and a sensual appetite, which Eve did not resist sufficiently, were further faults. As she did not regard these faults, and put the tempter away from her, she finally forgot God, took of the forbidden fruit, and ate. And not satisfied with having sinned herself, she went and persuaded Adam also, who was still innocent, to transgress the law of God. What caused this deplorable sin which produces so much misery and suffering in the world, and on account of which numberless souls perish eternally? Ah! an unguarded glance at the tree, a venial sin. "Behold how small a fire kindleth a great wood."—*James 3: 5.*

## PERORATION.

So you see that venial sins are great evils, for they also are an offense against God, deprive us of many graces, draw severe punishments after them in this world and the next, and lead by little and little to grievous sins. Resolve never to commit a venial sin knowingly and willingly. The devil is satisfied in the beginning with a hair; he knows ways and means gradually to obtain more and to make of it a rope, with which he draws men to perdition. If, through surprise, you have committed a fault, repent of it at once, and resolve for the future to be more prudent and careful and to commit it no more. Walk in the fear of God and avoid everything that is sinful, be it little or great, that you may be able to stand before his tribunal, who shall demand an account of every idle word. Amen.

## SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

EPISTLE. *1. Cor.* 9: 24; 10: 5, Brethren: Know you not that they who run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain.

And every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things; and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one. I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty: I so fight, not as one beating the air: but I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection: lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become reprobate. For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea. And all in Moses were baptized, in the cloud and in the sea; and they did all eat the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink (and they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ). But with the most of them God was not well pleased.

## 1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

## WE MUST BE ZEALOUS IN WORKING OUT OUR SALVATION.

The Church begins, with this Sunday, her second cycle of feasts, the centre of which is Easter, and which represents to us the completion of the work of our Redemption through Jesus Christ. That we may share the fruit of Redemption, we must not be idle, for God who created us without our assistance, will not save us without our coöperation. We must continually fight against the enemies of our salvation, mortify ourselves interiorly and exteriorly, and diligently avail ourselves of the graces which are offered to us for our purification and sanctification, and serve God with fervor and perseverance. This is the contents of the epistle for this day; St. Paul exhorts us to work out our salvation with fervor, and for this end proposes,

- I. Encouraging, and*
- II. Warning examples.*

## PART I.

To encourage us to be fervent in the business of our salvation, the Apostle proposes to our consideration the athletes, who contested for the prize in feats of strength or agility at the Olympian games in the arena of ancient Greece. He then assures us that he himself was obliged to chastise his body in self-denial and mortification, in order to subdue his flesh and its inordinate desires. The principal feats in these ancient games were,

1. Foot-racing, wrestling, and pugilism or boxing.

(a.) The reference to the former is evident, when he says: "Know you not that they who run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain." Of all these ancient Grecian athletic sports, foot-racing occupied the first place. It was held in extensive grounds, which were fenced in on all sides, and called the race-course. In the presence of an immense multitude of spectators, the competitors all started at a given signal, each straining every nerve to be first at the goal, to which was affixed the prize, usually consisting of a wreath of olive branches. The first to reach the goal grasped the wreath, and, of course, was declared the victor. Among the Greeks it was considered a great honor thus to become the champion. His name was taken up by the poets and celebrated in song throughout the land. You may well imagine how the contestants vied with one another to win the olive, for only one was crowned with this vain, perishable wreath. The Apostle reminds us that we are all entered in the race of life. The goal is heaven. It is the crown, than which there is nothing better or more desirable. If we run, we shall receive the prize, for not one only, but all who run shall be crowned. Should not this encourage us to strain every nerve on the arena here below, that is, to be solicitous for our salvation?

(b.) The Apostle, in reference to the wrestlers and pugilists, says: "And every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things; and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one." Besides foot-racing, there were feats in pugilism, that is, pugilists or boxers struggled with one another, by parrying with the fists. In order to make their fists heavier and to deal more violent blows, they wound straps around their hands, with pieces of lead or iron enclosed within. When a contestant was knocked down and rendered unfit for the further continuance of the fight, his adversary was declared the conqueror, and received, as a prize for his prowess, like the champion runner, also a wreath of olive. These contestants went into training and prepared themselves for the combat with all possible care, abstaining from sensual enjoyments and every kind of food that might weaken the muscular strength of the body or any of its members. They also practiced frequently. St. Paul accommodates himself to the times in which he wrote, and proposes these pugilists to us as patterns. If these boxers, he says, underwent such hard privations, practiced and exercised so frequently, and even jeopardized body and life in order to win a vain, contemptible prize, should not we willingly and cheerfully make every sacrifice for the incorruptible crown of heaven? Will not these ancient athletes rise up against us on the day of judgment, unless we take at least as much pains to gain heaven, as they took for a mere transitory crown

and a few withered leaves? And how many Christians are there who may well fear such an accusation?

(c.) The great Christian athlete then proposes himself as our pattern: "I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty; I so fight, not as one beating the air; but I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection; lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become reprobate." The Apostle here again refers to the foot-race and boxing struggle, and calls our attention to what he, and with him every Christian, has ahead of him. Although the athletes in the Olympic games did all that was necessary to win, yet it was uncertain at the start who should win, for in the race one contestant may get ahead of the other, while in the sparring contest, he may meet an adversary who parries all his blows so dexterously that he seems only to beat the air, uselessly spending his strength till finally he is overcome. Not so in the Christian race; we do not run in vain as at an uncertainty, nor do we beat the air; if we only work zealously for our salvation, heaven will most assuredly be ours. The Apostle afterwards, at the close of his life, assures us that he had fought the good fight, had kept the faith, had run his course, and that the wreath of victory was laid up for him in heaven. He next names the enemy that he fights with, the *manner how*, and the *reason why* he fights. The enemy was his own body, its in-born concupiscence, which, being his worst enemy, must be subdued. Let us then likewise subdue our body, that it may not plunge us into sin and vice, and finally into everlasting perdition. "Let not sin reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof."—*Rom. 6: 12*. We have many sad examples of the evils of concupiscence, and know to what depths it drags man when not combated and subdued. Witness Cain, Saul, Judas, etc. We must chastise.

This chastisement extends to **everything** that militates against sensuality, therefore to **interior** and **exterior** mortifications. Interior mortifications **are** the bridling of all inordinate inclinations and desires, **especially** of self-love. To outward mortifications belong the taming of the senses, the patient endurance of all sufferings and tribulations, as well as all exercises which are arduous to our body. St. Paul underwent these interior and exterior mortifications, lest perhaps, as he adds, after having preached to others, he himself should become reprobate. Now, if this Apostle, who had worked and suffered so much for Christ and his Gospel, and had received such extraordinary graces from God, considered it necessary to chastise his body and by interior and exterior mortifications to bring it into subjection, so as not to be damned, how much more reason have we, who are so very imperfect, so weak and prone to evil, to deny ourselves, and mortify all sinful desires, if we wish to escape damnation and be saved! Therefore our

Lord says: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."—*Matt. 16: 24*. Without self-denial and the carrying of the cross there is no following of Christ; without the following of Christ there is no hope of salvation. The Apostle enunciates this truth in these words: "And they who are Christ's, have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences."—*Gal. 5: 24*. The example of the Grecian athletes, and especially of St. Paul, should be an encouragement to us to work out our salvation with persevering zeal and make every sacrifice for the sake of heaven.

## PART II.

The Apostle, to encourage us to zeal in the business of our salvation, brings before us an example of warning. This example is the Israelites in the desert, on whom God had lavished the greatest benefits, and to whom he had promised the land of Canaan as their inheritance, but who, on account of their disobedience, died in the desert and never entered into the land of promise.

1. "For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all in Moses were baptized in the cloud and in the sea; and they all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink, and they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ."

The Apostle here mentions a few of the benefits which the Jews received from God.

(a.) First, he says of them, that all were under the cloud and passed through the sea. The cloud of which he speaks was that wonderful column of a cloud, under the protection of which the Israelites passed through the Red Sea and the desert. When Pharaoh with his army pursued them, the column of the cloud moved between him and the Israelites, and cast a dense darkness upon his camp, so that, during the whole night, he could not proceed, but to the Israelites it was a pillar of fire illuminating the night, so that, without any impediment, they could pass through the Red Sea.—*Ex. 13*. This cloud was for forty years a guide to the Israelites on their journey through the desert. During the day it went before them like an ordinary cloud, but at night it was a pillar of fire. This cloud was a great benefit to the Israelites.

(b.) Secondly, the Apostle says that all the Israelites were baptized through Moses in the cloud and in the sea. This is not to be understood as if Moses had really baptized the Jews when, under the protection of the cloud, they passed through the Red Sea. This baptism

is to be taken in the figurative and spiritual sense, and refers to the benefit which the Israelites received from the cloud. For this cloud tempered by its shadow the heat of the day, and illuminated the way at night; in this sense it was a figure of the grace of baptism, which moderates concupiscence, and illuminates the mind of man: the sea was a type of the water of baptism, out of which the Christian comes forth safely, as the Israelites came safe out of the Red Sea in their passage through it. Moses, who led the Israelites through the Red Sea, is the type of the baptizing priest, or rather of Christ, in whose name the priest baptizes.

(c.) The Apostle then says that the Israelites ate a spiritual food. This spiritual food is the manna with which God fed the Israelites daily, during their sojourn of forty years in the desert. This manna is a type of the Blessed Eucharist, which Jesus himself intimates in these words: "I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the bread descending from heaven that if any one eat of it he may not die"—*John* 6: 48, 50.

(d.) Lastly, the Apostle says that all the Israelites drank the same spiritual drink—namely, of the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. This was the rock from which, after Moses had struck it with his staff, water flowed in abundance, so all the people could quench their thirst. This rock followed the Israelites, not really, but in the sense that the people never again had any want of water, and were provided by God with everything necessary. The rock is called spiritual, because it referred to Christ and prefigured him. For Jesus is the rock that was struck with the staff, that is, with the holy cross, and out of whose side flowed his precious blood, which we drink unto eternal life; he is also the invisible rock of the Church, through whom all graces of salvation flow to us continually on our earthly pilgrimage.

2. "But with the most of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the desert."

(a.) The Israelites should have shown themselves thankful to God for these benefits and served him the more zealously. But they did not. Bible history describes them as a very fickle, stubborn people; in spite of all that God did for them, they offended him again and again, and fell even into idolatry. Therefore, God was not pleased with the most of them, that is, with all who violated his commandments, and the consequence was, that out of the six hundred thousand Israelites who had gone out of Egypt, only two, Josue and Caleb, entered the promised land; all the others died in the desert. Truly, a

warning for us Christians. God loved the Israelites as his chosen people and showered every blessing upon them; he had called them all to enter into the delightful country of Canaan, that overflowed with milk and honey. And yet, out of the six hundred thousand who, at their departure from Egypt, were already grown up, only two, Josue and Caleb, entered the promised land. What a small number! And why? Because they returned ingratitude for God's graces and always relapsed into their former sins.

Similar shall be the lot of all those Christians who do not avail themselves of the graces of God for their salvation; they shall be excluded from the kingdom of heaven. And, as out of more than half a million of Israelites, only two entered the promised land, so only a few men, and perhaps only a few Christians, shall go to heaven. Christ emphatically says in the gospel of this day: "Many are called, but few are chosen." Because the greater part of Christians do not live in the manner required for salvation, we need not wonder that by far the majority shall be lost.

#### PERORATION.

If you wish not to be lost with the crowd, but to be saved with the few, labor with zeal for your salvation. Take the words of Jesus to heart: "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent bear it away."—*Matt. 11: 12.* Worldlings, in pursuit of temporal and transitory good, spare neither pains nor labor. To this extent take them for your pattern. Look to the Saints of God also. Let their heroic example animate you. Like them, work and work on with courage and perseverance. Heaven is worth it all.

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#### SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

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GOSPEL. *St. Matt. 20: 1-16.* At that time: Jesus said to his disciples this parable: The kingdom of heaven is like to a master of a family, who went early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing in the market-place idle. And he said to them: Go you also into my vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just, And they went their way. And again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did in like manner. But about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing, and he saith to them: Why stand you here all the day idle? They say to him: Because no man hath hired us. He saith to them. Go you also into my vineyard. And when evening was come the lord of the vineyard saith to his steward: Call the laborers and pay

them their hire, beginning from the last even to the first. When, therefore, they came who had come about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first also came, they thought that they should have received more, and they also received every man a penny; and when they received it, they murmured against the master of the house, saying: These last have worked but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, that have borne the burden of the day and the heats. But he answering one of them, said: Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take what is thine and go thy way: I will also give to this last even as to thee. Or, is it not lawful for me to do what I will? is thy eye evil because I am good? So shall the last be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.

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## 2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

### THE CALL OF THE LABORERS INTO THE VINEYARD AND THE PAYMENT OF THEIR HIRE.

The master of a family in the parable of the gospel for this day is God; the market-place, the world; the vineyard, the Church; those who were called into the vineyard are all men; the laborers in the vineyard are the faithful; the steward is Jesus Christ, who pays every laborer his wages. The master of the family is said to have gone out at the third, sixth, ninth, and eleventh hours. The ancient Jews and Romans computed time differently from what we do. They commenced the day, not at twelve o'clock at night, but in the morning with the rising of the sun, so that their first hour, according to our reckoning, was six o'clock in the morning; their third was our ninth; their sixth, our twelfth or noon; their ninth, our three o'clock in the afternoon, and their eleventh would correspond from four to five o'clock in the evening. We, therefore, are six hours ahead of the Jews in our computing of time. Thus, when it is said that Jesus died at the ninth hour, it is not nine o'clock in the morning, but our three o'clock P. M.

With this preliminary explanation, let us consider the parable:

- I. *The call of the laborers into the vineyard;*
- II. *The payment of the wages for their work.*

#### PART I.

According to the holy Fathers and the interpreters of the Sacred Scripture, we may understand the various times of the day, in which the master of the family went out to hire laborers for his vineyard, to mean the whole space of time, from the creation of the first man to



Christ and his Apostles, and the life of each individual person from his birth to his death.

1. As the whole space of time from the creation of the first man to Christ and his Apostles.

(a.) The early morning, in which the master of the family went out, is the time from the creation of the world to Noah. God had created Adam and Eve, not only for the earthly paradise, but for heaven. That they might merit it in some measure, he gave them a commandment. This was their call into his vineyard. After their fall, he promised them a Redeemer, and hired them again into his vineyard. They themselves, and many of their descendants, as Abel, Seth, and all who in the Sacred Scripture are called children of God, followed the call of the divine Father, and went into his vineyard.

(b.) About a thousand years after the creation of the world, there was an evil time, so evil that it could not be worse. God himself said, in the bitterness of his heart, that he regretted that he had made man. He decreed to destroy by a deluge the vicious human race from the face of the earth, which he did after a hundred years. Only Noah, who was just, with his family, found grace before him; he was to become the progenitor of a better race. God promised him that he would no more punish the earth by a deluge, cautioned him and his posterity against idolatry, and inculcated on them the duty of serving him alone. This was the second going-out of the master of the family, about the third hour of the day.

(c.) The third time, about the sixth hour, was about two thousand years after the creation of the world; he went out, when he called Abraham. This going-out had again become necessary, because not only great immorality prevailed among men, but idolatry was spreading more and more, and the knowledge and worship of the true God threatened to disappear from the earth. God now made Abraham the progenitor of his chosen people, made a covenant with him, the sign of which was circumcision, and promised that in him, that is, in the Redeemer, who, according to his humanity, should descend from him, all the nations of the earth should be blessed.

(d.) About five hundred years later, at the ninth hour, the master of the family went out the fourth time, to hire laborers for his vineyard, and this was in the days of Moses, through whom God liberated the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt, and gave them a written law. This law contained, not only the ten commandments, but also a multitude of ordinances for the religious and political life of the

Israelites, its object being to separate them as his chosen people from all the nations of the earth, that among them the true knowledge and worship of God and the hope of a Redeemer might be preserved.

(e.) Lastly, after one thousand five hundred years, at the eleventh hour, he went out for the last time to hire laborers. This was that blessed time when Jesus Christ himself, God's only begotten Son, appeared upon earth, accomplished the work of our Redemption, and sent his Apostles to preach the Gospel to all men. This was the last going-out of the master of the family, wherefore St. John says: "We know that it is the last hour."—*I. John* 2: 18. It is not necessary for him to go out again, because the Church, established by him, shall exist to the end of time, and never cease to invite all the nations of the earth to enter his vineyard.

2. We may also understand the various times of the day to mean the life of each individual person, from his birth to the grave.

(a.) Those whom the master calls early in the morning into his vineyard, are the children. It is the will of God, that children serve him as soon as they arrive at a knowledge of him and of his law. For this reason Jesus says: "Suffer the little children to come to me."—*Matt.* 19: 14. Therefore the children are purified and sanctified by baptism, and brought into the vineyard of the Lord, into the Church. To these that were called early in the morning, most of us belong, since, shortly after our birth, we received the sacrament of baptism. Do we show ourselves grateful for this great grace? Christian parents, be anxious to have your children serve God in their tender age.

(b.) To those whom the master hired into his vineyard about the third hour, belong the growing-up sons and daughters. This is the loveliest and most beautiful age in the life of man, which should not be spent in levity and sin, but in the service of God, according to the admonition of the Holy Ghost: "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the time of affliction come, and the years draw nigh of which thou shalt say: they please me not."—*Eccles.* 12: 1. Examples: Joseph of Egypt, St. Aloysius, St. Agnes. God is especially pleased with the service of youth. But how small is the number of young people who serve God! The great majority of them live forgetful of God. And what awaits them? Probably a bad end. "A young man, according to his way, even when he is old he will not depart from it."—*Prov.* 22: 6. The sins of their youth will be on their conscience in their dying hour, like heavy stones. You, young people, consider this.

(c.) About the sixth hour, the master calls those into his vineyard

who are in mature age. These should follow the call of grace all the more as they have already reached an age in which youthful levity gives place to the earnestness of life, in order to redeem the sins of their youth, and again, because most of them, having a family, have the additional sacred duty imposed on them of giving good example. He who lives on into mature age in forgetfulness of God, and disregard of his religious duties, gives little hope that he shall ever be converted.

(d.) Those that are called at the eleventh hour are the people of declining age. Who would believe it possible that there are Christians who, although sixty or seventy years of age, do not yet think of the salvation of their soul, have still a bad conscience, and are not willing to provide for their dying hour. Oh, that these wretched people would only enter into themselves, and employ the grace which God yet gives them for the salvation of their soul! Oh, that they would daily say to themselves: I can not last long, I shall make good use of the remnant of my life in doing penance and making what atonement I can for my sins.

(e.) Lastly, who are those that the master calls at the eleventh hour, an hour before the end of the day, into the vineyard? They are those who are already lying on their death-bed. Because God wills not any one to be lost, he gives them also the grace necessary for their salvation. But will they make use of this grace? This is a question. Dismas was indeed saved on the cross, but his companion remained obstinate and perished. St. Augustine remarks, there is an example in the penitent thief on the cross, that no sinner, even on his death-bed, need despair; but there is only one, that none may presume. The rule is: "As a man lives, so he dies." Most rules, of course, have their exceptions; but there is none, perhaps, in which the exception is so rare as in this. Let no one, then, presume and procrastinate.

#### PART II.

At the payment of the wages we must consider—

1. *At what time, to whom, and by whom the wages were paid.*

(a.) "*When the evening was come.*" The evening is the end of life, death. This evening will come for us all; let us frequently think of it, especially every evening when we go to rest. As we do not know when it shall come, let us live in such a manner that it shall not find us unprovided.

(b.) "*Call the laborers.*" Therefore, only the laborers, and not those who stood idle in the market-place, received the stipulated wages.

And yet there are so many who do not work in the vineyard of the Lord. And who are they? All those who live in mortal sin, as also those who do the good they do, not for God, but only for temporal reasons. Of these it is said: "They have received their reward."—*Matt. 6: 5.*

(c.) The steward is Christ; for "the Father doth not judge any man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son." It is just that Jesus, who is our Redeemer, should also be our judge. If we make Jesus our friend by a faithful following of him, we need not fear him as our judge.

2. *What wages did all receive?*

(a.) All received a penny. By a penny heaven is understood. Not without reason heaven is called a penny. It was of silver, therefore of precious metal, to signify the greatness of the felicity which the Saints in heaven enjoy; it was round, which intimates the eternity of the heavenly joys.

(b.) All the laborers received a penny: those who came into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, as well as those who had worked in it from the early morning. How is this to be understood? In this sense, that all who serve God shall go to heaven, no matter in what age, whether in their childhood or youth, mature or declining age, they have begun to serve God. Thus the penitent thief is in heaven as well as St. John the Baptist, who in his tender infancy had dedicated himself to the service of God. But from this you must not conclude that all the Saints enjoy the same degree of beatitude, for that is in proportion to their merits. "He that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, he that soweth in blessings shall reap in blessings."—*II. Cor. 9: 6.* Neither must you suppose it is all the same whether one begins early or late to serve God, since he goes to heaven in the one case as well as in the other; for he who with this idea should delay his conversion to the uncertain future, would sin by presuming on God's mercy, and could not expect heaven, but hell.

3. *How did some act when they received the wages.*

(a.) The Gospel tells us that the first, who had gone into the vineyard early in the morning, murmured because they received no more than those who had gone in at the eleventh, that is, at the last hour of the day. How is this to be understood? Is there discontent and murmuring among the Saints in heaven? Are some of them not satisfied with their felicity? Do they envy those among them who are as happy as they themselves? Oh no, in heaven there is nothing but gratitude

towards God, nothing but contentment, love, and concord. This dissatisfaction and murmuring refers not to the Saints in heaven, but to the Jews—to the Jews, who, as the chosen people of God, expected to be preferred to all the other nations of the earth, and imagined that the Redeemer should come for them alone, that they alone should be called to his Church and to his kingdom, and were dissatisfied when they saw that the Pagans in all things were treated like them.

(*b.*) The master reproved the murmurers, explaining to them that they had no reason for dissatisfaction, inasmuch as they had received the wages agreed upon, that it was only malice of theirs to be jealous of others for what he had given gratuitously, and that their jealousy implied an infringement of his prerogative, since with his graces he can do according to his own free will. This reproach applies to all who suffer themselves to be ruled by envy.

#### PERORATION.

At the conclusion of the parable Jesus says: "So shall the last be first, and the first last," that is, the Jews, who were first called to Christianity, became the last, because they continued in their unbelief; the Pagans, on the contrary, who, according to their vocation, were last, became the first, because they received the Gospel with a believing heart. This word of Christ is also applicable to the just and to sinners: the just, for the sake of their justice, are the first; the sinners, on account of their sins, the last; the former may lose their justice, fall into sin, and become the last; the latter may be converted and become the first. The just, then, must beware of building on any false security as to their salvation, and sinners must equally dismiss all fear as to the possibility of their being saved. Jesus, by saying: "Many are called, but few chosen," enunciates the truth that God wills all men to be saved, but that only few correspond to the will of God, avail themselves of the means of salvation, and consequently the great majority are lost. We are all called: let us live in a pious and penitential manner, that we may be among the few chosen.

## SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

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### 3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

## THE APOSTOLICITY OF THE CHURCH.

"Go you also into my vineyard."—*Matt.* 20: 4. By the vineyard in the parable of the gospel for this day we understand the Church. It is the will of God that all men shall go into the vineyard and work in it, for the Church of Christ is the only institution for the salvation of men. As the master in the evening paid only those who had labored in his vineyard, so only those shall receive the penny of life everlasting who entered into the Church and in her worked out their salvation. St. Jerome says: "He that is not in the ark of Noah, that is, in the Church of Christ, shall be swept away by the coming deluge." For this reason our divine Saviour has made provision that his Church should be propagated over the whole earth and exist to the end of time. Thus men of all times and climes have an opportunity of entering into the Church of Christ and working out their salvation in her. But which is this Church of Christ? No other than the Catholic Church, for she alone possesses the marks which the true Church established by Christ must have. We have learned already three of these marks, and to-day I pass on to the fourth, which is Apostolicity, and shall explain to you—

*I. That the Church of Christ must be Apostolic;*

*II. That the Catholic Church is truly Apostolic;*

*III. That all the other religious societies are destitute of this mark;* from which it follows that the Catholic Church alone is the true Church established by Christ.

## PART I.

*The true Church must be Apostolic.*

**I. In her origin,** that is, she must be able to prove that she is founded upon the Apostles. The reason is self-evident. Christ made only the Apostles his representatives, and gave them the commission and power to found his Church and to propagate it in the whole world. Now, if we can prove to a religious society, that it has been founded, not by the Apostles, but by others, who stood in no communion and connection with the Apostles and had no commission from them, it is evident that that society is not the true Church of Christ.

2. *In her doctrine*, that is, her doctrine must agree in everything with the doctrine of the Apostles, and must not contain anything but what the Apostles taught. Christ appointed the Apostles the teachers of men, and sent the Holy Ghost upon them, who taught them all truth and communicated to them, in the preaching of the word of God, the gift of infallibility. From this it follows again, that a religious society which teaches anything but what the Apostles taught, can not be the true Church.

3. *In her pastors*, that is, she must have pastors who are connected with the Apostles and derive their spiritual power from them by proving their commission from them. Christ appointed the Apostles pastors of the Church and invested them, for the salvation of men, with the same power which he himself had received from his heavenly Father. Since his Church was to exist forever, and the Apostles lived not always, the power given to them by Christ is to pass over to others. These certainly can be no other than their lawful successors, that is, those who received their spiritual power from the Apostles. Only the Apostles could be the founders of the Church, for they alone were in possession of the spiritual power; therefore, only those who received their mission from the Apostles can be considered lawful pastors. The Apostles recognized none as a pastor of the Church who had not received his mission from themselves or from one of their lawful successors. They even imposed hands upon Saul and Barnabas, whom the Holy Ghost had already selected for the preaching of the Gospel, in order to empower them by this ordination and mission to perform the duties of the Apostleship. Consequently, those religious societies whose founders and pastors have no connection with the Apostles, can not be the true Church of Christ.

## PART II.

### The Catholic Church is Apostolic—

(a.) *In her origin*, for she dates back to the Apostles and was founded by them. This is an undeniable fact. We can name the founder, the new doctrine, the time and the place of the origin of every religious denomination separated from the Catholic Church, as well as the councils by which they were condemned. But of the Catholic Church we know nothing of the kind. We may go through the history of all centuries, and we shall find no trace of her having any other founder than Jesus Christ and his Apostles. In like manner it can be proved that, in the Catholic Church, no new doctrine contradicting what was formerly believed, was ever promulgated. Moreover, no time can be named when the Catholic Church had fallen away from the doctrine

taught by the Apostles, whether as regards dogma or morals, and all attempts to prove anything of the kind on the part of our adversaries have proved abortive; neither can a place be mentioned where the Catholic Church in the course of time originated; history can not point to any place where the Catholic Church was founded other than Jerusalem, to no other year than the year (34) after the birth of Christ. Lastly, no lawful council can be named in which the Catholic Church with its doctrine has been condemned. It is, therefore, an incontrovertible truth that the Catholic Church was founded by the Apostles and is of Apostolic origin.

(b.) *In her doctrine.* She teaches us only what the Apostles taught, either by word of mouth or by writing. If she ever had departed from the Apostolic doctrine, we should have an exact knowledge of it and be able to determine when and where this occurred. But how much soever our adversaries may exert themselves to adduce some such proof against the Church, they shall never succeed, for we can prove that every dogma which the Catholic Church proposes to our belief now, was believed by the Church of the Apostles in the very earliest days of Christianity. It was the perception of this complete identity of the doctrine of the Catholic Church to-day with that of the primitive Church, which, by God's grace, was the impelling motive for the return of many, in these latter times, to the bosom of the Catholic Church.

(c.) Lastly, *in her pastors,* for the Pope and the bishops of the Catholic Church are the lawful successors of the Apostles. That the Roman Popes succeeded St. Peter is quite evident, for we can trace back the line of the Popes from Leo XIII., our present Holy Father, to Peter, whom Christ himself made the visible head of the Church.

In the other episcopal sees this uninterrupted succession is more difficult to trace back, because many of them have long since ceased, while far the greater number was erected at a comparatively late date. Among the former were the once flourishing sees of Africa, while among the latter may be reckoned all the sees of the New World. Our diocese has seen only its third bishop, and the succession back to its first bishop, the good and lamented Dr. Bailey, is fresh in our own remembrance. Possibly every priest could, by great research, trace his own succession back to the Apostles. He knows the bishop who ordained him, may find then the name of the bishop who consecrated that bishop, and so on back through the lapse of centuries. This, however, is not necessary, for this much is certain, that no bishop has ever been recognized by the Catholic Church who was not lawfully called and consecrated and in communion with the Pope. The succession is more easily traced in the bishops. Every Catholic bishop can name



the bishop who consecrated him, as well as that of the Pope who confirmed him by sending the Papal bull, all of which is properly kept in the Vatican archives. Hence you see the bishops are connected directly with the Apostles and from them derive their power, as if St. Peter were yet to-day living in Rome! Thus the Catholic Church is *Apostolic in her origin, in her doctrine, and in her pastors.*

### PART III.

All religious denominations separated from the Catholic Church are destitute of this mark of truth and divine origin. They have—

1. *No Apostolic origin.* History testifies this incontrovertibly, for it furnishes the names of the founders of every sect, with the time and place and circumstances of the commencement. Thus it tells us of the Protestant sects, that only a little over three hundred years they were founded by Luther in Saxony, by Zwingli and Calvin in Switzerland, and by other apostates in this or that place. The Catholic Church had already existed fifteen hundred years, when these *religious* parties tore themselves from her and took place near her. Before that time no one knew anything of their doctrine, their first members were Catholics up to the time that they apostatized from the Catholic Church. They became bad Catholics, and if there had not been bad Catholics there would be no Protestants to-day. They are all new religious societies, and have no connection with the Apostles.
2. *They have no Apostolic doctrine.* If we compare their doctrine with the doctrine of the Apostles only superficially, we find that both differ as much as heaven from earth. The Apostles teach, for instance, that the commandments of God must be kept; the sects teach that the ten commandments do not concern Christians. The Apostles teach, "that neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, nor the sodomites, nor the covetous, nor blasphemers, nor thieves shall possess the kingdom of God."—*I. Cor. 6: 10*; they, on the contrary, that there is no sin for the Christian except unbelief. The Apostles admonish us to good works, that by them we may make sure our vocation and election; but they say that good works are useless, nay, at least venial sins.
3. *No Apostolic pastors.* They have no Pope; his place with them is occupied by the king or prince of the country in which they live, who certainly is not the successor of St. Peter. As little are their preachers the successors of the Apostles, for they can trace the line of their predecessors, at most, only to the author of their religious party; with him the chain breaks, because they had, neither from the Pope, nor

from a bishop in communion with the Pope, the authority to apostatize from the Catholic Church and to form a new religious society. Therefore, the religious societies, the old as well as the new, are in no way or manner Apostolic, for they are founded neither by the Apostles nor their lawful successors, neither does their doctrine agree with that of the Apostles, nor have they pastors who are connected with the Apostles and are able to derive from them their spiritual power and mission. They are without orders, without a commission. From this it follows that none of these religious societies can be the true Church of Christ, because they are not Apostolic; that, on the contrary, the Catholic Church, which possesses manifestly the mark of Apostolicity, is the only true Church established by Jesus Christ.

## PERORATION.

Return thanks to God daily for the inestimable grace of your Catholic faith, and cause your mother Church joy and honor by your good conduct. Take an active part in all that concerns her; mourn with her when the Lord permits her enemies to persecute and wound her; rejoice with her over her victories which she obtains, and over the conquests she makes. Walk as good, faithful Catholics, that the word of Tobias may be fulfilled in the Church: "Thou shalt rejoice in thy children, because they shall be blessed, and shall be gathered together to the Lord. Blessed are all they that love thee, and that rejoice in thy peace."—*Tob. 13; 17, 18.*

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 SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

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 4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

## THE WEEK-DAYS.

*"Go you also into my vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just."—  
Matt. 20: 4.*

The primitive Christians were so zealous that they commenced the fast for Easter in many places before Ash Wednesday. Moreover, they were accustomed in some countries to interrupt the fast for one, two, or more days in the week, but they always arranged so as to have a forty days' fast by the time Easter came round. Accordingly, the fast began in some places on the seventieth, in others on the sixtieth, and in others again on the fiftieth day before Easter. From this custom

of commencing their fast at different times the three Sundays preceding our Ash Wednesday are distinguished as Septuagesima, the seventieth; Sexagesima, the sixtieth; and Quinquagesima, the fiftieth day before Easter.

The Church considers these three Sundays, with their week-days, as a preparation for the holy season of Lent; for this reason she uses the violet color in mass, and nearly the same ceremonies as on the Sundays during Lent. We are, therefore, not to devote this time, with the children of the world, to levity, to sinful enjoyments and dissipations, but to the service of God for the salvation of our souls. The gospel for this day, which contains the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, exhorts us to this. If we wish to receive the penny of life everlasting, we must work in the vineyard, that is, we must serve God zealously as long as we live, not only on Sundays and holidays, but also on week-days. As I have already given you the necessary instructions on the proper keeping of Sundays and holidays, I shall speak to-day on the week-days, and explain to you,

- I. *What names and what significance they have,*
- II. *How we, as Christians, should sanctify them.*

#### PART I.

The week-days have an *ecclesiastical* and a *civil* name.

1. In the *Church language*, all week-days, with the exception of Saturday, which is named *Sabbath*, are called *ferials*. Sunday is considered the first ferial, therefore Monday is called the second ferial, and so on, Friday being the sixth ferial, after which comes the last day of the week, Saturday, or Sabbath. The Latin word *ferial* signifies as much as *feast-day*, and thus all the week-days have the name of feast-days or festivals.

Whence this name?

(a.) In the first ages of the Church the year was commenced on Easter Sunday, and the following days of that whole week were kept holy, the people abstaining from all servile work, and assisting at the divine service. Thus all the days of Easter week were *ferials*, or feast-days or festivals. As every Sunday of the year was dedicated to the Resurrection of Christ, on which account every Sunday was called the day of the Resurrection, the week-days following every Sunday received the name of *ferials*, although they were not kept holy, as the ferials of Easter week. In this sense the week-days of the whole year represent to us the Resurrection of the Lord, and are, as it were, echoes of this mystery. Hence, Origen says: "The Chris-

tians look upon all days as the day of the Lord, and even as the Easter day, because the heavenly Lamb offers himself daily for them, and they receive him every day."

(*b.*) It becomes priests to celebrate all days of the year in prayer, in the performance of their holy service, and in abstaining from worldly pursuits. Hence we read in the life of Pope St. Sylvester, that with the retention of the names of Sabbath and Sunday, he wished all other week-days to be called *ferials*, to signify that the priests, free from all worldly cares and occupations, should serve God. Hence the name *ferial* was given to week-days with special reference to priests. But to the laity also every week-day ought to be a *ferial*, that is, a day on which they should rest from all sinful works, and celebrate a feast to the Lord, in the exercise of Christian virtues and good works. Servile, that is corporeal labor, does not detract from this celebration, for it is according to the will of God, and if done with the right intention, is meritorious for heaven.

(*c.*) Saturday, from the beginning, was called the *Sabbath*, a day of rest. This name was given to it in remembrance of the rest of God from creating any more new creatures, and because in early times the Christians converted from Judaism, celebrated the Saturday by abstaining from servile work. But for more than fifteen hundred years Saturday is no longer a holiday with Christians. However, it is even yet customary in many Catholic countries to quit work earlier than usual on Saturdays, so as to give the working people an opportunity of attending the Saturday evening devotions in the church and to prepare themselves, by proper family devotion, for the mystery of the following Sunday.

2. The civil names of the week-days are *Monday, Tuesday, etc.* These names are of pagan origin, and are for the most part derived from the old deities which the ancients Romans and Germans venerated. Monday (*dies Lunæ*) derives its name from the moon (moon's day, contracted into Monday by dropping an "o" and the sign of the possessive case), that planet having been venerated by the ancient pagans as a deity. Tuesday (*dies Martis*) has its etymology from the old German god of war, "Tir," or "Tuesco," whom the Romans called Mars. Wednesday (*dies Mercurii*) from Mercury, a god who, according to the pagan mythology, had instructed mankind in the arts and mercantile affairs. He was known by the name of Woden (Woden's day, Wednesday is easy). Thursday (*dies Jovis*) from the old German god, "Thor," meaning *thunderer*, and whom the Romans called Jupiter, and hence from Thor's day we have Thursday. Friday (*dies Veneris*) from the German goddess, "Freia," whom the Romans called Venus. Satur-

day (*dies Saturni*) from the Roman god Saturn, who, if I must disgust you with mythological cannibalism, devoured his own children. I must, for the honor of Christianity, assure you that these names of the week-days no longer signify the gods and goddesses of the ancient pagans, but only those planets or stars which have the names of those pagan deities.

3. The Church and the piety of our fathers in the faith underlaid every week-day with a mystery of our holy religion. Thus Monday is dedicated to the Holy Ghost, because he is the author and dispenser of all graces, and we at the beginning of the week should implore his blessing and assistance for all our labors and undertakings. On Tuesday the faithful are accustomed to venerate the angels—the guardian angels in particular—in opposition to the ancient pagans, who invoked their war god Mars, or Tir, on this day. Wednesday in the early times was a station-day, that is, a day on which the Christians assembled at the graves of the martyrs, where they remained in prayer, fasting, and other pious exercises, from morning till three o'clock in afternoon. For this reason the Wednesdays in Advent and in the quarter tenses are fast days and days of abstinence. On Thursday the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar is particularly venerated, because Jesus instituted the Blessed Eucharist on Thursday. Friday is the death-day of the Lord, whence from the beginning it has been a day of fast and penance, and is yet a day of abstinence. Saturday is dedicated to the veneration of the Blessed Virgin, wherefore on this day particular devotions in her honor take place, such as the Rosary, the Litany of Loretto, and the Salve Regina, etc.

## PART II.

We should sanctify the week-days—

### 1. *By work.*

(a.) The etymology of *week-day* from *work-day*, or working day, is not difficult, and reminds us that we must work on those days. It may not be very pleasant counsel when I tell you to labor, but it is a duty imposed upon every one. While yet in the state of innocence, our first parents were commanded to labor. The name of week or working days of itself intimates that we must labor on those days. “And the Lord God took man and put him into the paradise of pleasure, to dress it and to keep it.”—*Gen. 2: 15*. Labor became still more of a duty for men after their sin. They were obliged to labor now not only to support themselves, but also in penance for their sins, and in order to keep from sin. “In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat thy bread, till thou

return to the earth out of which thou wast taken.”—*Gen.* 3: 19. “Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy works.”—*Ex.* 20: 9. To labor is a commandment of God, therefore idleness is sinful.

(b.) How must we work that we may fulfil our duty meritoriously? We must labor, *first, patiently*—that is, we must accept in our persons the difficulties of labor, remembering that labor is a work of penance for our sins. *Secondly, in the state of grace*, for he that labors in the state of sin need not expect anything hereafter for all his pains and troubles. “If I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity. I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”—*I. Cor.* 13: 2, 3. *Thirdly, with a good intention*, for this is also necessary, that our labor may become meritorious for heaven. To those who labor without a good intention, not for God’s sake, but for temporal interest, the words of the prophet apply: “You have sowed much and brought in little; you have eaten, but have not had enough; you have drunk, but have not been filled with drink; you have clothed yourselves, but have not been warmed, and he that earned wages put them into a bag with holes.”—*Agg.* 1: 6.

## 2. By prayer.

(a.) We pray on week-days, that God may bless our labor, for “neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth, but God, who giveth the increase.”—*I. Cor.* 3: 6. The most essential requisite to secure God’s blessing on our labor is prayer. On week-days we should by no means intermit the business of our salvation. To this, prayer essentially belongs, for without prayer we should refuse God the homage and adoration due to him, and deprive ourselves of the first and most necessary means for avoiding evil and doing good. Prayer on week-days is as necessary as on holidays.

(b.) *When should we pray particularly?* In the *morning* especially, to thank God for his gracious protection during the night, to recommend ourselves with our body and soul to his protection, and to ask his grace and blessing. We should pray before and after meals; for food and drink come from God, and it is just to ask and thank him for them. We should say our prayers before meals devoutly, that food and drink may not be used to pamper vice, but in proper moderation for the body’s health, and in accordance with the laws of nature, which are the laws of God. Thus will our meals be to us a means of honoring God and promoting the work of our salvation. Lastly, we should pray in the evening before we go to rest, in order to thank God for all the graces

and benefits received during the day, to offer up to him our labor, to ask his forgiveness for faults committed, and to recommend our soul and body to his protection during the coming night.

PERORATION.

Sanctify, therefore, not only the holidays, but also the week-days, in their own way. The working days have the same end as the holidays—they are given us by God, that on them we may serve him and work out our salvation. The difference between them is only this, that we devote the holidays exclusively to the service of God, whilst on the week-days we attend also to temporal pursuits. Perform diligently the labors of your state of life, and guard against idleness, for idleness is the mother of all vices. "If any man will not work, neither let him eat."—*II. Thess. 3: 10*. Join prayer to work, pray in the morning, before and after meals, and in the evening. If as good Christians you labor and pray, God will help you. He will help you in life, that you may have what you need for body and soul; in death, that you may finish your course happy here, and enter into eternal rest. Amen.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

## 5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

THE MASTER OF A FAMILY AND HIS VINEYARD.

*"The kingdom of heaven is like to a master of a family, who went out to hire laborers into his vineyard."*—*Matt. 20: 1*.

On all Sundays from this till Easter exclusive, the minister of God, while officiating at the altar, wears the violet-colored vestments. That beautiful chant of praise, the "Gloria," is not said, nor the "*Ite missa est*" at the conclusion of the mass. In all the prayers of the breviary and Roman Missal, there is not an "Alleluja" to be found. Everything indicates penance. With this Sunday the preparation of the forty days' fast commences. What a contrast is not presented by the world. This is its gay, festive time of balls. The high, spacious halls of every metropolis, city, and town in the land are ablaze with dazzling lights, in which may be seen fluttering the moths of pleasure in the dizzy mazes of the dance and masquerades and entertainments of every sort. Even to-day it is beckoning us on to pleasure, at a time, too, when the distant, rumbling sound of discontent and ill-humor can be

heard everywhere. Human society is standing, as it were, on the very crater of a volcano that is threatening an immediate eruption, the devouring effects of whose lurid flames, smoke, and burning lava the nations of the earth may very soon sensibly experience. But the world is blind. As in the days of Noah, people married and gave in marriage, ate and drank, made merry and were unconcerned up to the time of the deluge, so it is to-day; people disregard the threatening signs of the times and the imminent upheaval of society, live in levity and impenitence, and seem likely to continue to do so until the judgment of an outraged God shall have come suddenly upon them.

Let us not walk the ways of the blind world, alienated from God; let us rather follow Mother Church, who invites us to-day to go into the vineyard of the heavenly Father and to earn the penny of life everlasting by diligent labor. Let us for this end briefly consider—

*I. The master of the family,*

*II. The vineyard.*

#### • PART I.

The master of the family is God. This divine Father has three kinds of servants, for whom he provides: *The angels and saints in heaven, men upon earth, and the souls in purgatory.* To the first he gives white bread; to the second, middling; and to the third, black bread.

1. The divine Master of the family gives to his angels and saints in heaven only white bread, so white, good, and delicious, that the like of it can not be got in the world. Of them the divine Saviour says, "that they shall eat and drink at his table in his kingdom, and sit upon thrones."—*Luke 22: 29, 30.* He also compares the joys of the elect in heaven to a marriage feast. We must not think that sensual joys, as eating and drinking, are here meant; the Sacred Scripture only makes use of these sensible images, in order to make us understand approximately the spiritual pleasures which the blessed enjoy in heaven. Moreover, the felicity of the least saint in heaven is so great that, in comparison with it, all the joys and pleasures of the world are as a mere nothing. "What joys God prepares for his friends surpass all faith, excel all hope and love, all our wishes and desires. This attitude can be acquired, but not estimated; it can be merited, but not described."—*St. Aug.*

The rich may eat dainties, the poor must be satisfied with coarser diet. As rich people we must appear before God, that we may buy of him these dainties; we can not get them for nothing. But the riches with which we must be provided, in order to obtain them, consist not in money and temporal goods, but in good, meritorious works. Wherefore, labor the more that by good works you may make sure your voca-



tion and election. Many are saving every cent for years, that in their old days they may have something to live on, and should we not endeavor to become rich in good works, in order to be admitted to the table of the Lord in heaven ?

2. As long as we live upon earth, we receive from the heavenly Father bread made only of middling flour, that is, bread which is the medium between black and white. That is to say: In this life good and bad days take their turn, sometimes it is well, sometimes ill with us; sometimes we are satisfied, sometimes dissatisfied and sad; but sometimes, and this is the case with most people, it is middling, not too good, nor yet too bad. The question is, how are we to accept this middling bread ? We must receive it thankfully from the hands of our heavenly Father and eat it contentedly, but always keep in view the white bread which is prepared for us in heaven. If things go well with you, do not forget your destiny; consider that all the good things you may have upon earth are only of short duration, that you must die soon, and that of all you possess and enjoy, you can take nothing with you into the other world. Therefore, have no inordinate love for any temporal thing, and take care lest you offend God for the sake of temporal goods and enjoyments. But if things do not go well with you, if you must eat the bread of tears, you must not let your courage fail on that account; trust in God and be resigned to his holy will: sooner or later your bread of tears will be changed into the bread of joy, if not now in this world, surely in the next. "Our present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."—*II. Cor. 4: 17.*

3. At the same time, remember that if you be obliged to suffer much, you still have middling bread to eat, and bear in mind that the heavenly Father has other domestics, to whom he gives neither white nor middling, but all black bread. And these are our suffering brothers and sisters in purgatory. Oh, these poor souls would rejoice and thank God a thousand times, if they had only a middling loaf to eat; they would be glad if they had only sometimes a few days or hours in which they had nothing to suffer, if they had no more to suffer than we on earth. But their sufferings are without intermission, there is not a minute in which they are without pain, and the pains which they suffer every moment are incomparably greater than all the pains upon earth. "This fire (in purgatory) will not last forever, but it surpasses every pain and torture that a person has ever endured or can endure."—*St. Augustine.*

From this a twofold lesson follows for us: *First*, we should interest ourselves for the poor souls in purgatory and succor them by prayer, masses, indulgences, and other acts of charity: *secondly*, we should

make satisfaction for the temporal punishments due to sin, by penitential exercises and good works, and guard ourselves against venial sins, knowing that we shall have to suffer in purgatory till we have paid the last farthing.

## PART II.

The vineyard in the parable of the gospel for this day is—

### 1. *The Church.*

(a.) The master of the family *went out at all hours of the day to hire laborers into his vineyard.* Our divine Saviour invites men at all times to enter into his Church. Early in the morning, that is, immediately after the foundation of the Church, the Apostles, by the commission of their divine Master, went forth into the whole world, teaching all nations, and baptizing them.—*Matt.* 28: 19. At the third, sixth, and ninth hours, that is, in all centuries, the successors of the Apostles, the bishops and priests, went out and preached the Gospel to all nations. At the eleventh hour, that is, shortly before the end of the world, the same shall be done; even in those last times apostolic men shall preach the holy faith everywhere, and it is to be hoped that many Jews and Pagans will be converted. All of us were received into the Church immediately after our birth, when we received the Sacrament of Baptism. Let us thank God for this inestimable grace.

(b.) *Only those who went into the vineyard* were called in the evening to receive their wages. Only Christians who are in the bosom of the Catholic Church can hope for eternal beatitude. The Catholic Church is the only institution that Christ established for the salvation of mankind. "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."—*Matt.* 18: 17. "Whoever is separated from the Catholic Church, shall not have life everlasting, but the wrath of God remains on him, because he is separated from the unity of Christ, though he may think he leads a laudable life."—*Council of Zitra*, 412.

But shall all be lost who are not members of the Catholic Church? Before replying to this question, we must make a distinction: One may be a member of the Catholic Church either exteriorly or interiorly. To the Catholic Church belong *exteriorly* all those who are really Catholics, believing everything that the Catholic Church teaches. To her interiorly, or with the heart, belong all those who, though not professedly Catholics, yet are so disposed as to be ready to embrace the Catholic faith as soon as they be convinced of its truth and divine origin, who err only in a matter of judgment without any fault of theirs, and who endeavor to find out the truth and actually serve God according to their knowledge and conscience. All such, being Catholic at

heart, can be saved. For no one is damned but by his own fault. And God will never condemn any one on account of misjudgment or an inculpable error. Speaking of those outside the pale of the Church, we can not judge who is in error with or without his fault, because we can not look into the heart. God alone can do this. For this reason we neither can nor should condemn any one.

(c.) The wages, a penny, was paid in the evening only to those *who had labored in the vineyard*. Let us suppose that some had gone into the vineyard, but did not work therein, would they have received wages in the evening? Certainly not, for laborers, not idlers, are paid wages. Thus it is not enough that we be members of the Catholic Church; if we wish to be saved, we must work for our salvation. "Not every one that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."—*Matt. 7: 21*. "What shall it profit, if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him?"—*James 2: 14*. To believe what Christ teaches us by the mouth of his Church and to do what he commands, makes the true Catholic. He that believes as a Catholic, but lives not as a Catholic, shall fare worse on the day of judgment than infidels and heretics, because he knows God and his holy laws better, and has far more means of grace than they. Let us take this truth to heart and endeavor to lead a virtuous life.

2. The vineyard is *the heart*. A vineyard requires a great deal of labor and care. If it is to bring forth fruit, it must be cultivated, fertilized, and tilled. It must also be kept free from weeds. The same must be done with the vineyard of the heart, in order that the fruits of Christian justice may grow and ripen.

(a.) This spiritual vineyard must be diligently cultivated, and this is done by frequent and careful examination of conscience. Without such examination we can never arrive at a true knowledge of ourselves, and without this knowledge we shall never be able to amend our faults and curb our evil inclinations. The examination of conscience is the first requisite for a well-ordered life. Therefore, examine your conscience well, not only when you go to confession, but also every evening, and guard against being deceived in it by self-love.

(b.) This little vineyard *is to be fertilized*, that is, we must make use of the means of salvation. Such means are prayer, the word of God, and the Sacraments. If we view the lives of the Saints, we shall not find one among them who was not particular in the use of these means of grace. They were fond of prayer, all their labors were one continual

prayer, and often were they occupied in exercises of devotion till far into the night, very often the whole night. The word of God was everything to them; they missed no sermon; spiritual reading and meditation on the truths of religion was their favorite occupation. They had the greatest longing for the holy Sacraments, and esteemed themselves happy to be able to receive them frequently. Let us imitate them.

(c.) The vineyard must be kept *free from weeds*. It is often a matter of surprise to the diligent agriculturist, how quickly the rank weeds grow up in his clean ground, and where they all come from. He sees weeds that he never saw before in his ground, and whose seeds he never suspected were in it. But he makes up his mind at once to get rid of them, and to do so not merely cuts or breaks them off at the surface, but pulls them out by the roots. There are many weeds in our hearts. The seeds are there. There are our inordinate inclinations, all our passions, such as anger, ambition, envy, and the rank weed of impurity. These evil inclinations are real weeds, for they are bound to come to the surface, and they can never be banished, unless we pull them out by the roots. If, therefore, we wish to persevere in good, to make progress in virtue, and to keep our hearts clean and pure, the taming of our inordinate inclinations must be our daily occupation. Let us, then, be diligent laborers in the vineyard of our hearts, and let us never grow fatigued in rooting up the weeds of our evil inclinations, for after all, where the rankest weeds are wont to grow, is very often the very best soil.

#### PERORATION.

“Go you also into my vineyard.” Renew the good purpose of spending this holy time, which is a time of preparation for the forty days’ fast, not in the service of the world and sin, but in the service of God. You have yet time and grace, and you can yet merit heaven by working diligently in the vineyard of the Lord. Work whilst it is day. Cleanse your conscience by a full and sincere confession of all your sins, mortify all inordinate inclinations and passions, free yourselves from all sinful habits and connections, and work perseveringly for your perfection and sanctification, that hereafter you may obtain the penny of life everlasting. Amen.

## SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

## 6. MORAL SKETCH.

## THE SERVICE OF GOD.

*"Go you also into my vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just."—  
Matt. 20: 4.*

This is our vocation upon earth: we must serve God with lasting fervor, and labor at the paramount business of our salvation, that, at the end of our day's work, we may receive the penny of life everlasting. That this is the will of God, Jesus teaches us in the parable of the gospel for this day, for the master of a family who went out at divers hours of the day to hire laborers into his vineyard is God, who calls men of all times and persons of every age and condition into his service, that they may work out their salvation and be saved. Many of us have heretofore stood idle in the market-place of the world, and have not served God, but our sinful lusts and passions. Now, as the season of preparation for the forty days' fast is upon us, it is time for us to quit the service of the world and enter into the service of God. In order to encourage you to do so, I shall speak to-day on *the service of God*, and show to you that it is—

- I. Our most necessary,*
- II. Our only,*
- III. Our unceasing,*
- IV. Our most profitable business.*

## PART I.

The service of God is *our most necessary* business—

*1. Because God is our Lord and Master.* Every master requires his servants to serve him, and justly, because he *is* their master. God is our master far more, for from him we have not only board and wages, like other servants, but also our existence—our life. God should cease to be our Lord and Creator, he should cease to be God, if he could permit us not to serve him any more. As necessarily as God is God, so necessary is it that we serve him.

What do those do who do not serve God? They do what the rebellious spirits in heaven did. They say, if not in words, at least in their actions: "I will not serve. I do not recognize God as my Lord and Master. I will be my own Lord and God."

2. *Because our eternal salvation depends on it.* It is not necessary for you to accumulate great wealth and become rich. If you remain poor all your lifetime, you can be saved. Lazarus, who had not bread enough to still his hunger, is in Abraham's bosom, whilst Dives is tormented in the flames of hell. It is not necessary for you to enjoy good health; if you should be always delicate, and pass through years of sickness, you can be saved. Many Saints, as Gregory the Great, Lidwina, Theresa, were afflicted almost constantly with sickness and bodily infirmities, and yet they are in heaven. It is not necessary for you to live to old age; if you die in your best years, you can be saved. St. Aloysius, St. Stanislaus Kostka, and many other Saints, who died comparatively young, were saved. But it is necessary that you serve God, for if you do not serve him you shall surely be damned. The unprofitable servant in the parable.—*Matt. 25: 24.* In ancient pagan Rome every one who applied for citizenship was obliged to show his hands to the city fathers. If the hands had a thick, hard skin, and testified industry, he obtained citizenship; but if his hands were tender and delicate, like those of a lady, he was rejected as an idler. God will treat us much the same way when we appear before his tribunal. What folly, therefore, to wish to go to heaven, but not to be willing to serve him. And how many are guilty of this folly?

## PART II.

The service of God is our only business.

1. Jesus Christ several times emphatically declared this truth. When the devil suggested to him to fall down and worship him, he said to him: "Begone, Satan, for it is written: The Lord thy God thou shalt adore, *and him only* shalt thou serve."—*Matt. 4: 9, 10.* Again he said: "No man can serve two masters."—*Matt. 6: 24.* To Martha he said: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things. But *one thing is necessary.*"—*Luke 10: 41, 42.* This one thing necessary is the service of God.

2. *Reason* also convinces us of this truth. Every laborer and servant must serve his master or employer. Suppose a servant should work industriously the whole year round, not on the farm of his master, but on another man's farm, would his master be satisfied with him? Certainly not; and if the servant should demand wages, would he not say to him: I owe you nothing; let him pay you for whom you worked. All those who worked not for God, but for some one else, shall receive the same answer at the last judgment. Thus the service of God is our only business.

3. But some will say within themselves, how can the service of God be our only business? We are not religious, not monks, nor nuns; we live in the world and have the care of many things. I answer, this does not change the case; to whatever state you may belong, single or married, masters or servants, the service of God is your only business. To serve God means to do his holy will. If, therefore, you diligently perform the duties of your state, attend to your business, do your work, endure the hardships of life, you serve God, because God so wills it. Nay, when you eat, drink, sleep, enjoy a lawful pleasure, it is a service of God, because God so constituted our nature as to make these things in measure necessary to us, and it is his holy will, therefore, that we satisfy our bodily wants. In every state of life one may serve God and be saved. There is no state nor vocation in life in which there have not been Saints.

### PART III.

The service of God *is our unceasing business.*

1. There are no holidays in the service of God, all days are working days. Our vocation is to serve God always, all the years, all the days, and all the hours of our lives. The service of God begins with the awakening of reason. As soon as the child has the necessary knowledge of God and his holy commandments, and can distinguish between good and evil, it must begin to serve God; and this service of God lasts without any intermission till we draw our last breath. Our Lord demands this unbroken service, when he says: "No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."—*Luke* 9: 32. And again: "He that shall persevere to the end shall be saved."—*Matt.* 10: 22. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life."—*Apoc.* 2: 10. It is not enough to serve God only for some time. "If the just man shall turn away from his justice, and shall commit iniquity, . . . he shall die in his sins, and his justices which he hath done shall not be remembered."—*Ezech.* 3: 20. Examples: King Saul, Judas, etc.

2. Think of this, you young people. Many of you say to yourselves: I am young yet, I must enjoy life; when I become older I shall serve God. But among ten persons who in their youth lead a wicked life, there is hardly one who shall afterwards be truly converted. Besides, you have no lease of your life, you are not sure that you shall attain that old age which you so fondly hope for; you may not have time to amend your life, because you would not amend it when you had both time and means to do so. What has already happened to many, may happen to you—you may die in your sins. The man of mature age

says: I have no time now to attend to the business of salvation, I am overwhelmed with so many affairs, have so many projects before me; but after a while I shall set my conscience in order. Thus all live in the hope of having many more years before them. Even the man bent down with old age, and standing, as it were, with one foot in the grave, we often see making no provision for his salvation, under the vain delusion that his time is not yet nigh. And when the Lord comes like a thief in the night, and calls them from the stage of this life, they are unprepared, like the foolish virgins who had no oil in their lamps when the bridegroom came.—*Matt.* 25. If there be some present who must own in their hearts that heretofore they have not served God, let them begin now at least, when for them it may be the eleventh hour, to serve with redoubled fervor, in order to repair and redeem the time lost.

## PART IV.

The service of God is the most *profitable* business, for he that serves God, receives even in this life a most glorious reward.

1. *In this world.* How happy were our first parents, as long as they served God. They lived in paradise and had a heaven upon earth. How happy should all men be to-day, if Adam and Eve and their posterity had served God faithfully. There should be no evil, no pain no suffering, no death. But even now, when the curse of sin rests upon the earth, all who serve God zealously, are happy. God is with them; he blesses their undertakings and grants them quiet and contented days. Proofs from history: The Israelites, who were happy when they served God. Experience proves this. Families in which the fear of God prevails, enjoy the divine blessing, everything goes well. How different in families whose members do not serve God, but the devil. There is no peace, no holy joy, no contentment, nor any of those goods that make man truly happy.

It is true, the greatest servants of God frequently undergo hard trials, but they are never unhappy on that account, for the heavenly consolations which they enjoy, sweeten their sufferings. Examples: "The Apostles went from the presence of the council, in which they had been scourged, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus."—*Acts* 5: 41, 42. St. Lawrence, who, lying on a gridiron, jested. St. Francis Xavier, who, in the greatest wants and tribulations which as a missionary he was obliged to endure, experienced such an abundance of heavenly consolations that he asked God to stop them, because he could no longer endure them.

2. *In the other world.* God, in his infinite goodness, has decreed



to reward all his servants with everlasting felicity. What is this felicity? It surpasses all conception, it is unspeakable. St. Paul, to whom it was vouchsafed to be taken up into heaven, says that he there heard secret words, which it is not granted man to utter (*II. Cor. 12: 4*); that is, that he there saw mysteries and experienced joys which can not be expressed in words. Again he says: "The eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him."—*I. Cor. 2: 9*. Even an angel could not explain to us the greatness and quality of the felicity which the elect enjoy in heaven. And why not? Because this beatitude is supernatural, that is, it surpasses our natural faculty of comprehension. If the horse had understanding, says St. Alphonsus, and you should tell him that you would prepare a splendid meal for him, he would have visions of good hay and oats, for of other precious enjoyments he has no conception. So it is with us, when the beatitude of heaven is described to us. We call up before our vivid imagination visions of natural, temporal joys, because in our present state we have no more conception of the supernatural and heavenly joys than the horse has of the delicious viands that are served on royal tables. That we may be able hereafter to enjoy the beatitude of heaven, God must raise us to the supernatural state, must give to our soul, and, after the resurrection, to our body, qualities which elevate us far above our present natural state; he must, as it were, deify us. And this immeasurable beatitude shall last forever. Earthly joys and pleasures are transitory and perishable. How different from them are the joys of heaven! These have a beginning, but no end; they shall last without interruption, as long as God is God,—for ever and ever. "Our present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."—*II. Cor. 4: 17*.

#### PERORATION.

Behold, this is the reward which God will give us if we serve him. And who would not be willing to serve for such wages? The wonder is, that we who know and believe all this can entertain any other thought during our whole life. Shall I serve God, that I may be saved? Who, in the contemplation of heavenly things, would not turn his heart from the vanities of the world, and exclaim with St. Ignatius: "Oh, how disdainful is the earth to me when I contemplate heaven!" Let us follow the invitation of the Master, and go into his vineyard and labor diligently till the evening of our life, that we may receive for our pay the penny of eternal beatitude in heaven. Amen.

## SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

## 7. MORAL SKETCH.

## HOW MUCH GOD HAS HONORED LABOR.

*"So shall the last be first, and the first last."*—Matt. 20: 16.

This remarkable sentence of Jesus teaches us that God judges differently from man. According to the judgment of the world, the so-called higher states of human society, as the nobility, lawyers, physicians, clergymen, professors, artists, and military officers, are the first; they are honored, respected, and preferred. The state of the laborer is the last in the estimation of the world, and, therefore, little respected. But it is not so with God; before him "*the last shall be first.*" For this reason the Apostle says: "The mean things of the world, and the things that are contemptible, hath God chosen, and things that are not, that he might destroy the things that are; that no flesh should glory in his sight."—*I. Cor.* 1: 28, 29. Yes, the state of the laborer, mechanic, artisan, and farmer is highly respected in the eyes of God. I shall prove this—

*I. From the fact that the laboring state was instituted in the beginning of the world;*

*II. From the fact that this state was preferred in the beginning of Christianity.*

## PART I.

God instituted the laboring state in the very beginning of the world.

1. *Before the fall of man into sin.* Man was not to spend his life in idleness, even when he was yet in the state of innocence and dwelt in Paradise; on the contrary, it was the will of God that he should work. Thus the Sacred Scripture assures us in plain words: "And the Lord God took man and put him into the paradise of pleasure, to dress and to keep it."—*Gen.* 2: 15. This dressing and keeping of Paradise was no painful, hard labor, but it was nevertheless labor, which, according to the express command of God, man was to undergo. From this we see that the laboring state was instituted in those happy days even when man yet lived in the purest innocence; it was instituted in Paradise, that garden which brought forth an abundance of fruit of every kind—instituted in that happy state when there was yet no sin or sorrow, no tribulations or afflictions. And this precept to till the

earth was the first that went forth from the mouth of God to man; it was given to our first parents even before they were forbidden to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. A laboring family, therefore, was the first family upon earth, which is a clear proof that the principal task of man, in as far as he belongs to the natural order, consists in manual labor; and that the whole fabric of human society should rest on the laboring state, as the edifice on its foundation. Labor, therefore, is by no means a necessary consequence of sin, but an institution ordained by God while man was yet in the state of grace, and if sin had never found an entrance into the world, and if all men still possessed original innocence and sanctity, they should work: for "man is born to labor, and the bird to fly."—*Job* 5: 7.

2. After the fall of man, God renewed the precept of labor, and aggravated it by the addition of these words: "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread, till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken."—*Gen.* 3: 19. In the state of innocence labor was without any exertion, more a recreation than an occupation, and such as did not diminish, but increase the happiness of men. In the state of lost innocence labor was to be a means against sin, and an exercise of penance; in order to become so, it was to bring pains and difficulties in its train. If we bear patiently, and for the love of God, the difficulties connected with labor, we can atone for the temporal punishments due to our sins, and gather a great treasure of merits for heaven. Moreover, labor is one of the most effectual means of guarding ourselves against sin, for it tames and weakens the passions of the flesh, frees us from sinful thoughts and desires, banishes temptations, and strengthens and encourages us to everything good. "The roots of labor are bitter, but its fruits are sweet."—*Laertius*.

The laboring state is a very important one; it is the first state that was in the world, the state which God instituted before the fall, and which, after the fall, he remodeled in this way, that, on account of the pains and difficulties connected with it, it should become a means for the obtaining of eternal beatitude. Should you not, therefore, highly esteem the laboring state, and consider yourselves happy in belonging to it?

## PART II.

But what must raise the laboring state in our estimation still more is that it was preferred before all others in the beginning of Christianity.

1. How much has Jesus Christ honored the laboring state and preferred it before all others!

(a.) Whom did he choose for his mother? A virgin, who indeed descended from the royal house of David, but who lived in a state of poverty and gained a livelihood by the work of her own hands. Whom did he choose for his foster-father? A poor carpenter. So the salvation of the world, in a certain sense, came forth from the laboring state.

(b.) But Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would have not only a foster-father and a mother who belonged to the laboring class, but he would also belong to it himself up to his thirtieth year. During all this time he lived poor, and worked as hard as any of you; like every laborer, he earned and ate his bread in the sweat of his brow. Not only because he lived in the house of Joseph, but also because he underwent all domestic labors and assisted his foster-father in his shop, he was generally looked upon as the reputed son of Joseph, the carpenter.

(c.) If we contemplate the divine Saviour in his public life, we find that he was principally active *for the laboring classes*. Who were they in whose midst he sojourned, among whom he preached so often and performed miracles? They were the common people belonging to the laboring class. To them he spoke first, for them he showed special affection, on them he conferred the greatest benefits. "The poor (people of the laboring class) have the Gospel preached to them."—*Matt. 11: 15*. It is to the afflicted, and such as groaned under the burden of labor, that he addresses himself in these loving words: "Come to me, all you that labor and are heavily laden, and I will refresh you."—*Matt. 11: 28*. Who were the thousands that he fed in the desert? They were the poor, common people, who belonged to the laboring class, for if they had been of the higher classes, and rich, they would scarcely have been satisfied with such a frugal meal of barley bread and fish, and if Jesus had sent them away unfed, they would not have been in danger of fainting on the way, for they would have certainly provided themselves with traveling expenses. How much Jesus loves the laboring state and prefers it to others, we see exemplified in the sick servant of the centurion of Capharnaum. Jesus declared himself ready at once to come to his house, in order to heal his servant. He treated the royal officer quite differently, who requested him to come to him and heal his sick son. He said not that he would come to his house, but healed his son only after repeated entreaties.

(d.) From which class did our Lord choose his Apostles, from the class of the so-called respectable people, the learned and rich? No, he took almost all of them from that class of people to which you belong;

several of them were poor fishermen, owning scarcely more than their fishing tackle; the rest, with the exception of Matthew, earned their daily bread by manual labor. And Jesus chose these poor laborers for vessels of his grace, and, through them, renewed the face of the earth.

2. What did the Apostles think of manual labor after Christ had chosen and sent them to preach the Gospel to all the nations of the earth? Did they lay aside their former occupation? No, on the contrary, as far as compatible with their holy calling, they continued their trades. So we know that Peter, Andrew and John, and other Apostles were frequently engaged in catching fish long after they had become disciples of the Lord. St. Paul, who had learned the trade of a tent-maker, frequently mentions that he supported himself by the work of his hands. Thus he says: "I have not coveted any man's silver, gold, or apparel, as you yourselves know, that as for such things as were needful for me, and for them that are with me, these hands have furnished."—*Acts* 20: 34. And again: "For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; working night and day, lest we should be burdensome to any one of you, we preached among you the Gospel of God."—*I. Thess.* 2: 9. We also read in the Acts of the Apostles, that he worked in the city of Corinth for some time as tent-maker for a certain Jew named Aquila.

The Apostles not only worked themselves, but they also exhorted all the believers to lead an active, industrious life. Thus St. Paul writes to the Christians of Thessalonica: "Use your endeavor to be quiet, and do your own business, and work with your own hands, as we commanded you."—*I. Thess.* 4: 11. And again: "We declared this to you, that if any man will not work, neither let him eat, for we have heard that there are some among you who walk disorderly, working not at all, but curiously meddling. Now, we charge them that are such, and beseech them by the Lord Jesus Christ, that, working with silence, they would eat their own bread."—*II. Thess.* 3: 10, 12

#### PERORATION.

The laboring state is, indeed, an honorable state, because it was established in the beginning of the world, and was preferred before all other states in the beginning of Christianity. Deem yourselves happy that you belong to this state, and walk in such a way that you may be an honor to it. Labor for Christ, be active and industrious at your trade or avocation in life, not merely on account of your temporal subsistence or from earthly motives, but also on account of God, to do his holy will and to honor him by your labor. "Whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."—*Col*

3: 17. Labor with Christ, that is, in union with him, in the state of grace. Guard yourselves against sins which are so frequently committed at work, such as impatience, cursing, blaspheming, unchaste discourses and vile jokes, injustice and cheating, desecrations of Sundays and holidays. Sanctify your work by pious thoughts and ejaculations, and thus lead a pious life, that, on the day of judgment, you may be found faithful servants of God and worthy of being rewarded with the eternal beatitude of heaven. Amen.

## SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

EPISTLE. *II. Cor.* 11: 19; 12: 9. Brethren: You gladly suffer the foolish, whereas you yourselves are wise. For you suffer if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take from you, if a man be extolled, if a man strike you on the face. I speak according to dishonor, as if we had been weak in this part. Wherein if any man is bold (I speak foolishly), I am bold also. They are Hebrews; so am I. They are Israelites; so am I. They are the seed of Abraham; so am I. They are the ministers of Christ (I speak as one less wise), I am more; in many more labors, in prisons more frequently, in stripes above measure, in deaths often. Of the Jews five times did I receive forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I was in the depth of the sea; in journeys often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethren: in labor and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in many fastings, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things which are without: my daily instance, the solicitude for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is scandalized, and I do not burn? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things that concern my infirmity. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for ever, knoweth that I lie not. At Damascus the governor of the nation, under Aretas the king, guarded the city of the Damascenes to apprehend me. And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and so escaped his hands. If I must glory (for it is not expedient indeed), but I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body I know not, or out of the body I know not: God knoweth), such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man, whether in the body or out of the body, I know not: God knoweth; that he was caught up into paradise; and heard secret words which it is not granted to man to utter. Of such an one I will glory: but for myself I will glory nothing, but in my infirmities. For even if I would glory, I shall not be foolish; for I will say the truth. But I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth in me, or anything he heareth from me. And lest the greatness of the revelations should puff me up, there was given me a sting of my flesh and angel of Satan, to buffet me. For which thing I thrice besought the Lord, that it might depart from me; and he said to me: My grace is sufficient for thee; for power is made perfect in infirmity. Gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

# 1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

## IN WHAT THE APOSTLE GLORIES.

The whole epistle for this Sunday is little else than a panegyric pronounced by St. Paul upon himself. But how does it come that the great Apostle can, consistently with humility, eulogize himself? Does it not appear to savor a little of conceit or vanity? Oh, no; in so writing he had nothing in view but the honor of God and the salvation of the Corinthians. In the Christian congregation at Corinth, which St. Paul himself had founded, false teachers had arisen, who distorted Christian truth, endeavored to make the Christians half-Jews, and boasted of being the true teachers and apostles of Christ, speaking contemptuously of the Apostles, and particularly of St. Paul. St. Paul, therefore, saw himself placed in the necessity of rising against these false teachers and of justifying himself against their slander and calumny, because the Corinthians were in the greatest danger of being seduced by them.

Let us study the contents of the epistle for this day. St. Paul glories—

- I. In his pedigree and office;*
- II. In his sufferings as an Apostle;*
- III. In his rapture into heaven.*

### PART I.

St. Paul glories in his lineage and his office.

1. The Apostle of the Gentiles reproves the Christians at Corinth for allowing themselves to be duped and treated so infamously by the false teachers, and then says that he could glory in all those things of which they boasted. They glory, he says, in being Hebrews, that is, descendants of Heber, the great-grandfather of Abraham, who alone, in the confusion of languages at Babel, is said to have preserved the true faith and the ancient language; they boast of being Israelites, that is, the lineal descendants of Jacob, and not such as before were Gentiles, but who, being circumcised, afterwards embraced Judaism; they also boast of having the patriarch Jacob for their progenitor, and therefore of being children of the promise; and lastly, that they are ministers of Christ and apostles, and indeed such as alone understand the Gospel and preach it without error. St. Paul, in reply to these vauntings of the false teachers, shows that he is a Hebrew, an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, and a minister of Christ, and that he could

glory in these things, if he cared about glorying. Moreover, he intimates to the Corinthians that he, even if those false teachers were ministers of Christ, which, however, they were not, would have a superior claim to this name, because he had endured far more tribulations than they. The Apostle, however, never thought of presuming on his pedigree from Abraham, for he knew that with God there is no regard of persons, and the Gentiles were called to Christianity as well as the Jews, and were to have part in the grace of Redemption. Much less was he proud of his Apostolic office, for he calls himself the least of the Apostles, and not worthy to be called an Apostle, because he had persecuted the Church.—*I. Cor.* 15: 9.

There are some, who, I know not why, presume a great deal on their lineage and station in life. How foolish! Is it any merit of theirs that they descend from renowned, respectable, or aristocratic parents, occupy a higher station in society, or own more acres and more money than many of their fellow-beings? "Is not every best gift and every perfect gift from above, coming down from the Father of lights?"—*St. James* 1: 17. Must we not exclaim to every one, whoever he may be: "What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"—*I. Cor.* 4: 7. Beware of glorying in your station, or temporal goods and advantages, and beware of boasting of these things, much less of thinking yourselves better than or despising others; on the contrary, give the honor to God, walk in humility and holy fear, considering that of them to whom much has been given, much shall be demanded.

St. Paul fulfilled all the duties of his vocation with commendable zeal. He was ever most active in the preaching of the Gospel; to glorify the name of Jesus, and to save souls, was his study day and night; all that has value in the eyes of men, honor and reputation, rest and convenience, liberty and life, he sacrificed in his service. Let every one fulfil the duties of his state of life with conscientious fidelity, and not regard the difficulties which are frequently connected with the performance of those duties, and consider that our salvation depends on this fidelity.

## PART II.

### *St. Paul glories in his sufferings as an Apostle.*

Christ had said of this Apostle at his conversion: "I will show him how great things he must suffer for the sake of my name."—*Acts* 9: 16. How truly the Lord had spoken, St. Paul experienced. His entire apostolic career was an uninterrupted chain of tribulations, persecutions, and sufferings of every sort. He speaks to-day in general of the



prisons, maltreatments, and perils of death which he endured, and singles out the following:

(a.) *Of the Jews five times did I receive forty stripes save one.* The Jews were not allowed to give more than forty stripes. Not to transgress the law (*Deut.* 14: 2, 3), they always gave only thirty-nine. To give stripes was the greatest punishment which, at that time, the Jews were permitted to inflict. And if they had had the power to punish any one with death, St. Paul surely would have become a victim of their animosity, for they persecuted him with the direst hatred.

(b.) *Thrice was I beaten with rods.* This was as scourging which could be inflicted only by the Romans, and consisted in this, that the person to be scourged was bound to a pillar and received the lashes upon his bare back, with a scourge made of leather straps. The punishment by stripes and rods was considered as painful and dishonorable as death itself, and very often caused death.

(c.) *Once I was stoned.* This occurred at Lystra, where the populace, instigated by the Jews, stoned him; severely hurt, he fell unconscious to the ground; they, thinking he was dead, dragged him out of the city, but God miraculously preserved his life.—*Acts* 14: 18.

(d.) *Thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I was in the depth of the sea.* To suffer shipwreck far from sight of land, and to be tossed holding to a piece of wreck, such as a board or anything you could lay hands on, in the angry waves, to see the forked lightnings and hear the despairing shrieks of the dying rising above the peals of thunder, is a condition so fearful as to be utterly beyond the power of the most vivid imagination to portray, or the most gifted artist to depict. St. Paul assures us that he experienced these terrors three times in his missionary voyages, having been as long as a day and a night at one time in the water.

(e.) St. Paul speaks, then, of the *numberless perils and tribulations in journeying on land and water.* The ever-active, never-resting Apostle seldom staid long in one place, unless his vocation rendered it absolutely necessary. He was continually traveling: he went from Jerusalem through Arabia, Greece, Asia, and came to Rome, nay, to the uttermost parts of the known world, and preached the Gospel everywhere. At that time traveling was very laborious, and we have no conception in our days what hardships he must have endured on his journeys.

(f.) Add to these sufferings and tribulations the *business forced on him by his solicitude for all Christian congregations.* St. Paul had

already formed Christian congregations in many places. He was frequently appealed to by these congregations in different affairs, to instruct, to advise, to correct. How much time and labor, how much grief and anxiety, did not this cost the Apostle! If any were scandalized, or any led into vice or apostasy, how he burned with zeal! He could not rest till the evil was repaired, the fallen person raised, the erring man corrected, and the sinner brought to penance.

(g.) Lastly, the Apostle mentions *that the city of Damascus was guarded to apprehend him, and that he was in danger of death*. The governor of Aretas the king, instigated by the Jews, guarded the city day and night, to render his escape impossible. St. Paul, they thought, was caught and doomed, but the Christians passed him through a window in a basket, let him down over the town wall, and thus he escaped the hands of his enemies.

2. So much did St. Paul suffer for the name of Jesus, for his own salvation, and for that of others. Reflect what little similarity there is between your pleasant, easy-going life and that of St. Paul.

(a.) Perhaps you have spent the greater part of your life in labor and pain, in watching, in hunger and thirst, in heat and cold, and in tribulations of every description, but for what purpose? Ah! for the world, for your temporal prosperity, or much worse, for the gratification of your sinful passions and desires. Yes, the devil has also his martyrs. Provide for your temporal necessities, but at the same time neglect not the salvation of your soul. "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul."—*Matt.* 16: 26.

(b.) How is it with your faith? Are you, with the Apostle, ready to make every sacrifice? Ah, how many Christians are there to be found now-a-days to whom their faith is quite a thing of indifference, who care little or nothing how holy Church is daily slandered, calumniated, reviled, and persecuted, who half side with the enemies of the Church, are dumb through cowardice when she and her ministers are calumniated, and would as soon or sooner read the infamous prints in which all that is holy is day after day held up to ridicule as Catholic books and periodicals. What an account will not such lukewarm, faithless Catholics be obliged to give to Christ! I am a poor sinner myself, but with such I should not like to die.

(c.) As St. Paul was solicitous for the churches, so those among you who are superiors must be solicitous for your inferiors. How do you fulfil your duties in this regard? Do you see to it, that your children and those under your charge live according to the ordinance of the

Gospel? Do you keep them in good discipline? Do you see to it, that they fulfil their duties of religion? "If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

### PART III.

#### *St. Paul glories in his rapture into heaven.*

1. Some fourteen years before he wrote the second epistle to the Corinthians, and seven after his conversion, St. Paul had a wonderful vision. He says: "I know a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, whether in the body I know not, or out of the body I know not, God knoweth, such a one caught up to the third heaven." The man in Christ, of whom the Apostle here speaks, is no other than himself. It is from humility and modesty that he does not name himself. The ancients distinguished a threefold heaven: the aerial heaven, in which are the clouds; the starry heaven or the firmament, where we see the stars; and heaven proper, the abode of the blessed. This last or third heaven is that to which St. Paul was transported. Whether this transport was done in his body and soul, or in the soul alone, the Apostle can not say. Sufficient it is, he beheld the glory of God, and heard secret words, as he himself says, which it is not granted to man to utter. By these secret words we may understand the mysteries which were revealed to him and shown to him in their profundity, whilst he was rapt in heaven, but which can not be expressed in human language, and can not in this mortal life be conceived and understood. A greater grace was given to St. Paul than to Peter, James, or John at the transfiguration on Mount Tabor, for they saw but a few rays of the glory of Jesus, whilst St. Paul was rapt even to heaven, and there heard and saw mysteries of which only the angels and saints have any knowledge. God granted him this favor to console him in his combats and sufferings, and to strengthen him in the endurance of all the tribulations which were before him yet in his Apostolic labors.

2. We are all called to that third heaven, to which St. Paul was rapt. Let us frequently meditate on the unspeakable felicity which is there prepared for us, and let us have a hearty desire after its enjoyment. "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord."—*Ps.* 83: 2. Let us imitate St. Paul, if we wish to go to heaven. Let us constantly work for our perfection and sanctification and the salvation of others, as far as our station in life and Christian charity oblige us. Let us consider nothing too hard and arduous, when there is question of serving God and saving our souls, for heaven is worth it all.

## PERORATION.

In the conclusion of the epistle for this day, St. Paul mentions the violent temptations which he endured from Satan, and says that he thrice besought the Lord to deliver him from them, and that he received the answer: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for power is made perfect in infirmity." And Paul humbly subjected himself to the will of God; he prayed, labored, fought, conquered, and received the crown of justice. For the past eighteen hundred years he has been in heaven. Let us do as he did. Let us pray, labor, and fight, and God shall be with us and crown us as victors in heaven. Amen.

## SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

GOSPEL. *St. Luke 8: 4-15.* At that time: When a very great multitude was gathered together and hastened out of the cities to him, he spoke by a similitude: A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed some fell by the wayside, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns growing up with it, choked it. And some fell upon good ground, and sprung up, and yielded fruit a hundred-fold. Saying these things, he cried out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And his disciples asked him what this parable might be. To whom he said: To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to the rest in parables, that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. And they by the wayside are they that hear: then the devil cometh, and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved. Now they upon the rock, are they who when they hear, receive the word with joy: and these have no roots; who believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns, are they who have heard, and going their way, are choked with the cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit. But that on the good ground, are they who in a good and perfect heart, hearing the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience.

## 2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

WHY THE WORD OF GOD HAS SO LITTLE EFFECT AT THE PRESENT TIME.

Nothing grieves the farmer more than to see that the good seed which he has sown bears no fruit. This is our case as pastors of souls, when we see that the seed of the word of God, which we sow every

Sunday and holiday, remains without fruit. And how often is this the case! There never was a time in which the word was preached so often and with so much zeal as in our days. Things, however, instead of growing better, grow worse, and a hundred sermons are not sufficient to convert our frivolous, impious men. Whence comes this deplorable fact? Why has the word of God, which formerly renewed the face of the earth, so little effect in our days? Jesus Christ gives the reason in the gospel of this day. The seed of the word of God frequently falls—

- I. By the wayside, where the fowls of the air devour it;*
- II. Upon rocky ground, where it can not take root;*
- III. Among thorns, where it is choked.*

#### PART I.

*"A sower went out to sow his seed. And, as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it."* Explaining these words, Jesus says: *"They by the wayside are they that hear; then the devil cometh, and taketh the word out of their heart, lest, believing, they should be saved."* That the word of God profits many Christians nothing, comes from the devil. Christ emphatically says as much. The Philistines, after they had reduced the Israelites to subjection, permitted no blacksmiths among the subject people. They took this precaution lest they should make swords and spears for themselves.—*I. Kings* 13: 19. The devil imitates the Philistines; if he had the power, he would destroy all the preachers of the true word of God, because he knows that they arm men against his attacks.

What does the devil do to render the word of God ineffectual?

1 *He tries to keep man from hearing it.* He suggests: Why should you listen to a sermon? You know already all that can be said. For a well-informed man like you it is only nonsense and a sheer waste of time to sit there listening to the same old story that you have heard a hundred times before. Have sense, and leave the sermon to the common crowd and to those simple, uneducated women. Besides, you have too much important business on hand, too much on your mind, to waste your time and dissipate your brain, hearing those same old stale discourses and explanations. Moreover, the Church obliges us only to hear mass on Sundays and holidays. There is no command to hear a sermon. Slip in, then, at an early mass, which will last only half an hour, and the law of the Church is complied with. It is very tedious to sit in the cold church during the winter, exposing yourself to a bad cold. Or, it is summer now and it is too hot. You will inhale that

vitiated atmosphere which must necessarily arise from so many people assembled together. This, with many other such suggestions, is the language of the devil, by which he succeeds in inducing many to neglect the hearing of the word of God! And how shall the word of God produce an effect when it is not heard? Oh, that such Christians would ponder on the words of Christ: "He that is of God, heareth the words of God; therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God."—*John 8: 47.*

2. *He tries to prevent the word of God from making an impression.* Many hear the word of God, but do not follow it. Whence this? From the devil. The seed which falls by the wayside is food for the birds; they come and devour it. So does the devil; he takes the word of God out of their hearts. And how does he do it? By various suggestions he tries to keep man in his impenitence. You need not, he says, be disturbed and terrified by that sermon. Hell is not so bad as the preachers make it. God is pure mercy, and never created man to damn him; some of the greatest sinners are in heaven; look at Mary Magdalen with her seven devils, and the thief on the cross. These priests exaggerate everything. Why, to hear them, one would think no person could be saved. And even grant that matters do not stand well with you at present, you need not be in a hurry; after a while you may set your conscience in order. The priests themselves teach that, "where sin abounded grace abounds still more," and you shall become the greater saint. Thus the devil suggests and lulls many a sinner to sleep, from which state he shall never awake till he receive the demon's hot embrace in hell.

3. The devil has his confederates, and these are the unbelievers, the scoffers at holy things and holy persons, priest-haters, all whom he employs to render his efforts for the destruction of men more effectual. After every sermon these hirelings of the devil give vent to their bile, rebuke and criticise, calumniate and scold, mock and blaspheme, till they have taken the last grain of the good seed out of the heart of those who heard it. Woe to those servants of Satan, the word of Christ applies to them: "He that shall scandalize one of those little ones, that believeth in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."—*Matt. 18: 6.*

## PART II.

"And some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. *Now, they upon the rock are they who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have*

*no roots; who believe for a while, and in the time of temptation fall away."*

1. Many Christians hear the word of God every Sunday and holiday; they take pleasure in it, and make good resolutions for the amendment of their life. But as soon as the former temptations assail them, they relapse into the old sinful life: "they believe for a while, but in the time of temptation fall away." The priest preaches, for instance, on impurity, on drunkenness, on pride, on avarice, and shows that these vices infallibly lead to eternal damnation; he preaches on enmities, on ill-gotten goods, and proves that these sins, unless they are quitted and repaired, draw the punishment of hell after them; he preaches most eloquently and in the most vivid colors on the delay of repentance and the danger of this delay. What is done? Many hearers who feel themselves hit, are seized with a salutary fear; they acknowledge to themselves the bad condition in which they are living, and resolve to turn a new leaf and begin a new life. But there it stops; it never comes to a real and lasting amendment. They resemble the trees that blossom, but never bear fruit, because the blossoms always fall off too soon, before the fruit is formed.

2. Whence cometh this? *From the bad soil of the heart.* The seed that falls upon stony ground may spring up, but when the heat of the sun comes, it withers away, because it has not the necessary moisture. So it is with many hearers of the word of God. They have a soft heart; they are easily moved and terrified. This natural sensibility of heart is often increased still more by the sinful life which they have been leading; for some sins have the effect of softening one's nature. People weep for anger and grief; the intoxicated and impure weep very easily. Now, if such sinners, at the hearing of the word of God, are moved interiorly, groan, weep, and promise amendment, this is only an effect of the sensibility of their heart, but not absolutely a true spirit of repentance, as St. Peter and Magdalen had when they bewailed their sins. These mere emotions of nature usually vanish again as soon as the causes cease that called them forth. The worst feature is, that such sinners, imagining that their merely natural emotion and tears are signs of a true, God-pleasing repentance, persevere in their bad condition and expose themselves to the greatest danger of dying penitent only in appearance and so be lost eternally. Be, therefore, not deceived; the most pious sentiments, the hottest tears, and the best resolutions can not save the sinner from perdition, unless he truly change his life, and make a radical amendment.

## PART III.

"Some fell among thorns, and the thorns growing up with it choked it. *these are they who have heard, and, going their way, are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit.*"

1. The seed, falling among thorns, springs up, grows for some time, and promises a good yield, but the thorns grow faster than the tender blade, dislodge and finally choke it altogether. So it is with many Christians, they have a good and susceptible heart for religion and virtue; at the hearing of the word of God they frequently make the best resolutions, they really put their hand to the plough, and work for the salvation of their soul, they lead a retired life, pray much, frequently go to confession and communion, do good works, and justify the hope of obtaining after a while a high degree of Christian perfection. I shall here only remind you of what you must yourselves have more than once observed—the zeal with which some persons enter on a holy life during a mission, a jubilee, or on a sick-bed. But the thorns, the *fatal* thorns, choke the hopeful seed.

2 And what kind of thorns are these? They are worldly cares, the distractions of business, the enjoyments and pleasures of life. Many Christians, after having sincerely begun the work of amendment, allow themselves to be overwhelmed again by worldly cares. Then they forget God for their business, and, impelled by their own bad concupiscence and intimidated by the bad example of the world, return again to sin, and the last state of such persons is worse than the first. Those parents had resolved never again to appropriate to themselves in their business an unjust cent, but their awakening avarice and their inordinate love for their children, make them act contrary to their resolutions and again violate the law of justice in many ways. That man promised he would curse and blaspheme no more, but how long did he keep his promise? As long as his hateful passion did not excite him. But as soon as something excites his anger, he curses and blasphemes as before. Those young people earnestly resolved to give up their sinful familiarity and to live chastely. But, behold, as soon as the old confederate in sin approaches, the old sinful lust is inflamed in their hearts, and they relapse into the former life of sin.

In fine, very many Christians have a kind of wish to be converted, but they are not in deep earnest, they lack the courage and resoluteness to break with the sinful world, to control their bad passions, and to walk perseveringly on the apparently rough way of penance. They resemble those soldiers who, as has so often occurred in history, make



a sudden detour to storm and carry at the first assault a comparatively weak fortress, but who, as soon as the cannons of the besieged begin to thunder from the parapets, cowardly fall back in dismay, and declare that the fort is impregnable.

#### PERORATION.

St. Anthony of Padua preached once in the presence of a great multitude, in which there were many hundred public sinners. They took the sermon so much to heart, and the power of his eloquence was so great, that nothing was heard on every side but weeping, sighing, and moaning, so that the Saint was frequently obliged to stop in the midst of his discourse. Some cried out: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Others struck their breasts, exclaiming: "Woe to me, I have deserved hell." Others, with uplifted hands, vowed amendment: "No more, O Jesus, no more will I sin." And many were converted, and from that moment to their dying hour led a penitential life.

Those were Christians with whom the word of God did not fall by the wayside, nor upon a rock, nor among thorns, but upon good ground; for they heard the word of God, and kept it in a good and perfect heart, and brought forth fruit in patience." "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only," (*St. James* 1: 22), and study to practice what you hear. Quit your bad habits, tame your passions and sinful desires, repair all injury done, practice the virtues of your station in life, and persevere in grace to the end. If you do this, you shall be of the number of those of whom Christ says: "Blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it."—*Luke* 11: 28. Amen.

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#### SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

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### 3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

#### THE READING OF THE BIBLE.

*"The seed is the word of God."*—*Luke* 8: 11.

The word of God, which Jesus in the gospel for this day compares with seed, is principally contained in the Sacred Scripture—the Old and New Testament. This has been the constant belief of the Church. St. Paul already assures us that "all Scriptures are divinely inspired"—

*II. Tim. 3: 16.* And St. Peter says: "Prophecy came not by the will of man at any time; but holy men spake, inspired by the Holy Ghost."—*Pet. 1: 21.* The Fathers of the Church teach the same. St. Clement of Rome calls the Sacred Scriptures enunciations of the Holy Ghost, which contain nothing bad or false. Justin the Martyr calls the authors of the Sacred Scripture men who speak in the Holy Ghost; and Clement of Alexandria says that the mouth of the Lord and the Holy Ghost have spoken everything which the Sacred Scripture contains.

The Bible is, therefore, a book to be most venerated, for it was written by a special illumination and inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and contains nothing but the pure, infallible word of God. But this word of God shares the fate of the sowed seed, with which it is compared by Jesus. Many read the Bible, but the word contained in it falls upon bad ground, and, therefore, remains without fruit. I shall speak to-day on the reading of the Bible, and propose and answer the following three questions:

*I. Are we allowed to read the Bible?*

*II. Ought we to read the Bible?*

*III. How should we read the Bible?*

#### PART I.

*Are we allowed to read the Bible?* No reason can be assigned why any one, even of the common people, should be absolutely forbidden to read it. The Apostles and Evangelists did not write the New Testament for a few individual persons or only for the learned, but for entire congregations and for Christians of every station in life. The Gospels and Epistles of the Apostles were read publicly during the divine service, and the Apostles gave to the bishop and priests the command to read their letters or epistles to the assembled congregations. As the Sacred Scripture contains nothing but what is orally preached, I can see no reason why the reading of the book should be forbidden.

The most learned and pious men most earnestly recommend to Christians the reading of the Sacred Scripture, as well as meditation thereon. St. Chrysostom says: "Let us devote ourselves diligently to the reading of the Sacred Scriptures; for he who reads the divine truths with all diligence and the holiest desire, certainly can not be abandoned." St. Bernard says: "Those who are accustomed to hear God often and willingly in the Sacred Scripture, seem, if not exteriorly, at least interiorly, to carry the sign of election for eternal life." St. Ambrose remarks: "The Sacred Scripture is a rich pasture, the daily reading of it pastures, exhilarates, and strengthens us, if we taste, and, as it were, masticate over again what we have read."

2. *In the reading of this book, however, we must observe the rules laid down by the Church.*

In the course of time the reading of the Bible was greatly abused; wherefore the Church saw herself compelled to lay down certain rules, that the bread of life might not cause the death of her children. Already in the middle ages heretics abused the Bible, especially the Albigenses, who tried to prove their errors by it, namely, that there are two Gods, a good and bad, that the baptism of the Church avails nothing, that matrimony is sinful. This induced the Council of Toulouse, in the year 1229, to forbid lay people to read the books of the Old and New Testament in the vernacular tongue. The Council of Oxford ordained, by penalty of excommunication, that no translation of the Bible should be put into circulation, unless it was approved by the bishop. At the time of the so-called Reformation the Church had still more reason to forbid the general reading of the Bible in the vernacular tongue, because the false teachers had been guilty of a great deal of dishonesty in the translation of it.

3. Now-a-days every one is allowed to read it in the vernacular, provided the translation, according to the rescript of Pope Benedict XIV., be approved by the Church and accompanied by real explanatory annotations from the Fathers of the Church. Consequently, the bare text, without note or comment, is forbidden. It would be well for those who wish to read the Bible, even when accompanied with annotations and the *imprimatur* of the bishop, to ask the advice of their pastor or confessor, and to act according to his direction, for he can best judge what portions of the sacred book would be adapted to them, or whether the reading of it at all would be profitable to them or not. I may here remark that those who do not read the Bible at all suffer by no means the loss of the word of God on that account, because they hear the pure word of God every Sunday in sermons, and find it in their catechisms and other spiritual books of devotion, and especially in the Bible History of the Old and the New Testament, containing the principal points and events of the Bible.

## PART II.

The innovators of the faith, in the sixteenth century, asserted *that all men without exception, must read the Bible*. The Church rejects this asseveration, and with justice, for—

1. *The reading of the Bible is not necessary for salvation.*

(a.) Reason alone convinces us of this. The Sacred Scripture of the Old Testament was, as is known to all, composed by Moses and

other pious men. The world, therefore, had already existed for about two thousand five hundred years, during all of which time there was no Sacred Scripture. In like manner the Apostles and Evangelists wrote the Sacred Scripture of the New Testament many years after the death of Christ, when the Christian religion was already propagated in many countries, and numbered millions of adherents. Now, here is the stubborn query: How did matters stand with all those people who lived and died before the writing of the Sacred Scripture, if the reading thereof was necessary for salvation? They could not have been saved. Thousands upon thousands even now should share the same fate, for it is an incontrovertible fact that thousands of Christians never in their life read one page of the Bible, and many more do not know even how to read. Who will be so foolish as to assert that all these Christians, on account of the omission of the reading of the Bible, shall be lost?

(b.) If the reading of the Bible were necessary, we should have an explicit command to that effect. But such a command was never given either in the Old or in the New Testament. Christ commanded the Jews, not to read the Bible, but to hear the teachers who sit on the chair of Moses.—*Matt. 23: 2, 3*. In like manner he commanded his Apostles to *teach* all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded. The Fathers of the Church in general recommend the reading of the Bible, but never once do they say that such reading is of obligation. St. Augustine says: "A man who bases himself on faith, hope, and charity and immovably holds to it, does not need the Scripture, except for the instruction of others." Irenæus and Tertullian write in the same sense.

(c.) Our adversaries endeavor to prove by various specious reasons, that every one is bound to read the Bible. They say, Since Christ said to the Pharisees: "Search the Scriptures" (*John 5*), he inculcated and enforced the reading of the Bible on all. Christ did indeed say to the Pharisees: "Search the Scriptures." But it was said to them only. It was said by way of reproach to the Scribes and the Pharisees, who, reading the Scriptures as they did, and boasting of their knowledge of them, thought to find life everlasting in them, and yet they would not receive him, of whom all those Scriptures gave testimony, and through whom alone they could attain that true life. Besides, it fell to their particular province to read the Scriptures and to know them, just as it does to Catholic priests, and if they had diligently read the books of the Old Testament, especially of the prophets they would have found out that he was the promised Messiah, and that he spoke the truth. Again, St. Paul commanded the Christians at Colossa to read

the letter which he had written to the Christians of Laodicea.—*Col. 4: 17*. Our Protestant friends here rub their hands in glee and jump to the conclusion that the Apostle obliges all men to read the Bible. But can they not see that this command does not concern all believers in general, but only the presiding elders of that particular church? They were accustomed, in those primitive times, not only to read the Apostolic letters to the assembled congregation, but also to explain them. The Sacred Scriptures of the New Testament consisted then of these fragmentary writings scattered among the different churches. And they did exactly what we priests are now doing every Sunday and holiday, when we read fragments or extracts from the Epistles of the Apostles and from the four Gospels of the Evangelists, and then explain them in accordance with the Fathers and the teaching of the Church.

2 *The reading of the Bible is no universal means of virtue.* He that reads the Bible finds in it in reality no more than what he has heard already in oral instructions. If he meet obscure passages he explains them according to the already received instruction, or he asks his pastor or some other well-instructed person for an explanation of them; or omitting this, he passes on, and thus does not come at all to the understanding of the obscure passage. In all these cases it is better for the ordinary man to make use of oral instruction in matters of religion, than to read the Bible, in which many things must remain unintelligible and obscure to him. That most people become no better by Bible reading history abundantly proves. The innovators of the faith in the sixteenth century recommended nothing more urgently than the reading the Bible. What was the consequence? The unity of faith, as well as Christian humility and obedience, were lost, and people became daily worse. It came to pass that the most ignorant people, with the Bible in their hands, would regard neither temporal nor spiritual authority, and insisted on living according to the desires of their own hearts. The Protestant Bible Societies distribute annually an immense number of bibles among heathen nations, but scarcely one Pagan is ever converted to Christianity thereby.

3 The unlimited reading of the Bible opens the door to many evils. History proves that the universal and the indiscriminate reading of it has been the occasion of many aberrations and the most horrible abominations. Examples of this are found in the daily newspapers. Witness: Freeman in Maine, the Oneida community in New York, and that other hideous sect in Utah Territory.

## PART III.

1. The Sacred Scriptures must be read with *profound reverence*. The Bible is no common book, it was not composed by the powers of the human mind; it is holy and divine, for the whole contents is inspired by God, and is therefore the word of God in the strictest sense. We must, therefore, as St. Chrysostom says, approach the reading of the Bible as if we were entering heaven, for the reading of the Bible is a peep, as it were, into heaven, the mouth of the prophets being God's mouth. If we have even reverence for the writing of a temporal king, how much more reverence do we not owe to the Bible, which has God himself, the King of heaven and earth, for its author.

2. *With childlike humility and simplicity*. We may say the same of the reading of the word of God as of its hearing. The Scribes and Pharisees frequently heard the word of God, which Jesus preached, but it profited them nothing, because pride blinded them. Only the humble disciples comprehended the meaning of the divine word by degrees and arrived at the truth. Therefore Jesus said to them: "To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to the rest in parables, that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand."—*Luke 8: 10*. We must not interpret and explain obscure and difficult passages according to our own private judgment, but humble ourselves, acknowledge our ignorance, ask God for light, and ask advice of our pastors.

3. *With a heart solicitous for salvation*. He who reads this divine Book only for the gratification of his curiosity, or from a motive of pride, in order to shine before others by his knowledge of the Bible, derives no benefit from his reading, even should he peruse the whole Bible through. You must read the Bible to become better instructed in the truths of our holy religion and its doctrines and precepts, and thus be the better enabled to perfect and sanctify your life. You must read, therefore, not cursorily, but carefully, stop frequently in your reading, take to heart the one or the other passage which suits your case, ponder on it, apply it to yourselves, and make good resolutions. A beautiful example how we are to read the Bible is found in the treasurer of Candace, the Queen of the Ethiopians.—*Acts 8: 26-40*.

## PERORATION.

Although you are not *obliged* to read the Bible, yet you *may* read it, provided the translation is approved of, and accompanied by the usual annotations from the Fathers of the Church. If you be able to read the original, so much the better. Read it then with reverence, and

when you come across certain difficult passages, hard to be understood, ask your pastor for an explanation of them, and resolve to make the holy lessons contained therein the rule of your life, that the word of the Psalmist may be fulfilled in you: "Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the chair of pestilence. But his will is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he shall meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree that is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season. And his leaf shall not fall off; and all, whatsoever he shall do, shall prosper."—*Psalm 1: 1-4.* Amen.

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## SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

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# 4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

## THE CEREMONIES AT THE PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

*"The seed is the word of God."—Luke 8: 11.*

The sower in the parable of our gospel for this day, who went out to sow his seed, is the priest and pastor of souls. The priests of the Catholic Church strew the seed of the divine word every Sunday and holiday, and wish nothing more ardently than that this seed should spring up in the hearts of men and bring forth the fruit of Christian justice. The public discourses which they deliver are, in truth, the word of God, for they preach nothing but what God has revealed in the Old Law, through the patriarchs and prophets, and in the New Law, through his only begotten Son and the Apostles. As the word of God is a constituent part of the divine service, the Church has ordained in the delivery of it, as well as in all other performances of the divine service, certain ceremonies which shall form the subject of our meditation to-day; namely, what ceremonies—

- I. Precede the preaching of the word of God;*
- II. Accompany it;*
- III. Follow it.*

## PART I.

1. The Church has prescribed for the preaching of the word of God a sacred attire, *i. e.*, a surplice or alb, and a stole. The reason is because the office of preaching belongs to the priesthood, and only priests

are allowed to exercise this office. When bishops and priests announce the word of God in their sacred vestments, they speak officially and appear as the representatives of Jesus Christ, who preach by his commission and in his name. They can say with the Apostle: "We are ambassadors of Christ, God, as it were, exhorting by us."—*II. Cor.* 5: 20. To the preachers of the word of God, the word of Jesus applies: "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."—*Luke* 10: 16.

The *color of the stole* accommodates itself always to the feast, and thereby it is intimated that the sermon belongs to the feast; those, therefore, err who imagine that the sermon on Sundays and holidays is something unessential and superfluous.

2. The place where the sermon is preached is the *pulpit*. It was customary from the beginning to deliver the Christian discourses from an elevated place. Standing, like the true sentinels they are, on the high battlements of the Church, and casting, as the beautiful etymology of the word "*episcopus*" indicates, a watchful and solicitous gaze over the flock that is peacefully grazing in the pastures of divine grace beneath them, the Catholic bishops in their official episcopal robes present a magnificent sight. St. Augustine says: "The bishops have an elevated seat, that they may look over all the people and watch them. From that place they are your teachers." The place from which the sermon was delivered was called in the beginning *cathedra*, or *throne*. Bishops and priests frequently mounted an *ambo*, *i. e.*, a reading desk, when they preached, which was standing right at the entrance to the sanctuary, and to which two or three steps led. Our present pulpits are not of very ancient date, having originated in the thirteenth century. The elevation of the pulpit has a natural reason, namely, that the preacher can look over the assembled faithful and can be more easily understood by them; but it has also a symbolical signification, indicating the dignity of the preacher as an ambassador of God, and urging us, as Christians, to seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God.—*Col.* 3: 1.

3. The preaching of the word of God begins with a prayer. So it was in the most ancient times. Before the bishops and priests commenced to preach, they signed themselves with the sign of the cross, a custom which even the Christian emperors observed when they delivered a public speech. After that they saluted the people with the words, "Peace be with you;" and they answered, "And with thy spirit."

Now-a-days a short hymn is sometimes chanted by the choir, in which the Holy Ghost is invoked for the worthy and effectual delivery



of the word of God. If the sermon is to produce fruit, both the preacher and the people need the grace of the Holy Ghost: the preacher, that he may receive light, strength, and unction from above, that he may preach the word of God convincingly and penetratingly; the people, that they may receive what is said, make earnest resolutions, and live accordingly.

4. After the invocation of the Holy Ghost, the preacher signs himself with the sign of the cross, and announces his text. The text is generally a passage of Holy Writ, and indicates briefly the contents of his sermon. Then he exhorts the faithful to invoke the Holy Ghost by saying devoutly an "Our Father" and "Hail Mary." The sign of the cross is made now and at the reading of the gospel, because all our actions should begin in the name of the most holy Trinity, and because we can hope for blessing and fruit only through the merits of Jesus Christ crucified. The Lord says in the gospel for this day, that some seed fell by the wayside, and, in explaining it, adds that they are those who hear the word of God, then the devil comes and takes the word out of their heart, lest, believing, they should be saved. The devil endeavors to hinder the fruit of the divine word, that he may not be able to do this, we sign ourselves with the sign of the cross, which has the sacramental power of keeping away diabolical influences and temptations, or of rendering them ineffectual. The "Our Father," which is said, is in its proper place, for it is the best prayer, and the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," refers especially to the word of God, which Jesus compares to bread. We justly also say the "Hail Mary," for Mary, the Mother of God, is the Mother of grace, and it is said of her, "that she kept all the words of Jesus, pondering them in her heart."—*Luke 2: 19.*

5. After the prayer, the priest rises and signs himself with the sign of the cross, and calls upon all present to do the same; he then reads the gospel for the Sunday or holiday, which is a selection from one of the four Gospels. These gospels, or pericopes, date back to the earliest times. A proof for this is the collection of the pieces of instruction which Pope Damasus ordered St. Jerome to arrange, and which date back at least to the fifth century, for that collection contains very nearly the same epistles and gospels which we have in our Missal and Gospel-book to-day.

## PART II.

At the preaching of the word of God there are but few ceremonies, of which I shall mention only two.

1. In the first Christian ages, the bishops and priests were seated whilst they preached, only now and then they preached in a standing

posture. The hearers in Italy and the East used to sit, but in France and Africa were accustomed to stand; only the infirm and weak were allowed to sit. Now-a-days the word of God is everywhere preached in a standing posture, but the hearers sit down.

Both the standing and the sitting at the preaching of the word of God has a deep foundation. Jesus taught, standing and sitting. If the priest preaches standing or sitting, he imitates the example of Jesus. The sitting, as it was formerly customary, signifies that the preacher is a teacher; for teachers during the hours of instructions generally sit down. The standing posture, which is prescribed in our days, indicates the priest as the ambassador of God; for ambassadors generally deliver the messages of their princes in a standing posture.

That the people hear the word of God either standing or sitting, has also both its historical and symbolical reason; an historical, because the hearers of Jesus sometimes stood and sometimes sat down; a symbolical, because the standing posture indicates the reverence for the word of God. The sitting posture, the interior quiet and recollection with which we should hear the word of God, as Mary Magdalen, who was sitting at the feet of Jesus when he spoke to her. Some Christians do as the disciples on Mount Olivet did—they sleep during the sermon! This sleeping is wrong, for it is an offense against the reverence due to the word of God, and renders it useless.

2. *In the early times no one was permitted to leave the church during the sermon.* In many churches the doors were locked; in others, deacons or ostiarii were standing at the entrances, so that no one could go in or out without a serious reason. In Africa those who, without any reason, left the church during the sermon, were excommunicated. It is true, now-a-days, Christians who, without a serious reason, leave the church during the sermon, are not excommunicated, but they sin in many ways, because they refuse to the word of God the due reverence, they deprive themselves of a frequently very necessary means for their instruction and amendment, disturb the quiet and order of the service, and give scandal and bad example to others.

There are various pretexts by which Christians excuse their going out during the sermon, or staying away altogether. They say:

(a.) *The sermon lasts too long.* How long does it last? Generally only half an hour, rarely over it, and never over an hour. And is that too long? If it were an opera, a comedy, a ball, would half an hour or an hour be too long?

(b.) *It is laborious to hear a sermon.* Are not corporal and spiritual works, which refer to temporal things, laborious? Is it not a sign of

forgetfulness of salvation and of tepidity to be afraid of the little difficulties incident to the hearing of the word of God, and, on that account, to neglect it?

(c.) *The sermons are too tedious, it is hardly possible to wait for the end of them.* You must bear in mind that the preacher does not speak to you in order to entertain you agreeably like an actor, but to instruct and amend you. And every sermon attains this object, if you hear it with a well-prepared heart. If one is abroad or in a place of banishment, and letters or verbal news are brought to him of his parents, brothers, sisters, or friends, he will care little whether those letters are written beautifully and artistically, or whether the news is communicated to him in flowery language; no, the shorter and more succinct the news are, the more readily will he hear and the more joyfully receive them. The same is the case with the news from the heavenly country, about God, his providence, his love and goodness, his promises and commandments; the manner is nothing, it is the matter, the thing itself, which we should have at heart.

### PART III.

The ceremonies which follow the sermon consist in the publications and in prayer.

1. Already in primitive times the feasts and fasts, ecclesiastical occurrences and ordinances were published to the assembled congregation after the sermon. This was so much the more necessary during the time of the persecution, as these publications could not be made in any other way. In our day the custom most commonly prevails to publish, immediately after the sermon, all the ecclesiastical devotions prescribed in that particular church for the ensuing week, as also and especially the occurring feasts and fasts, if any there be. Then follow the publications of the bans of matrimony, if there be any persons to be married. That the publication of the bans of holy marriage should be made during the divine service on Sundays and holidays in the forenoon, is a strict ordinance of the Church, and unless the bishop grant a dispensation, must by no means be omitted. Other publications which are made after the sermon, refer to ordinances of the bishop, to public collections, to the day on which new priests are ordained, to jubilees, missions, and indulgences which concern the parish; lastly, to announce the ecclesiastical punishments which have been inflicted by the bishop upon one or more persons. Purely temporal things should not be published in the church.

In the primitive ages of the Church the names of the departed were

read out at the memento after the elevation, and recommended to the prayers of the faithful. A reminiscence of this ancient custom is still retained in the reading of the names of the departed immediately after the sermon, in order that we may remember our faithful fellow-Christians in our prayers.

The publications are concluded with *several prayers*, first for the *dead*. This prayer is properly said after the sermon, for the sermon directs our thoughts to eternity, and calls upon us to pray for our departed brothers and sisters. The memory of the dead brings home to us the serious truth that we also must die and appear before the judgment-seat of God, a truth which is very appropriate to encourage us to follow the lessons heard in the sermon.

After the prayer for the dead, come the prayers for the living. First the acts of the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity, with the act of contrition and purpose of amendment. As faith, hope, and charity, to which contrition and a purpose of amendment belong, are the three principal virtues, and on the exercise of which the whole Christian life depends, it is proper that acts of these fundamental virtues be elicited by the faithful after the sermon. Pope Benedict XIV. ordained, in the year 1742, that on every Sunday after mass, the three divine virtues should be read to the faithful, in order that the people might become accustomed to acts of these virtues, and so might elicit them also on other days. And in order to excite us to a more frequent exercise of these acts, he granted in addition to the indulgences already annexed, two Plenary ones.

(a.) A Plenary Indulgence once a month to all those who shall devoutly recite the acts of faith, hope, and charity every day for that space of time.

(b.) A Plenary Indulgence at the point of death, if these acts are made devoutly in the heart, or merely breathed with the lips. Benedict XIV., in the decree relating thereto, declares that no particular set form of words or expressions is necessary for the saying of them, but that any one may use whatever form he pleases, provided it express distinctly the particular motive of each one of the three theological virtues.

After the acts other prayers are frequently recited before the priest leaves the altar, for instance, in seasons of widespread affliction or calamity. Thus we pray now for the Holy Father, the Pope, for peace and unity, and for the protection of the Church, now so grievously oppressed and persecuted.

## PERORATION.

My advice to you is: Listen attentively to the word of God. Do not increase the number of those lukewarm, careless Catholics, who scarcely ever hear a Christian instruction; make it your rule, if possible, to hear the word of God every Sunday and holiday. But hear it as becomes good Christians, with attention and reverence, and with the firm purpose of regulating your life according to its teaching. During the week think frequently of what you have heard Sunday in the sermon, renew your resolution, and pray to God, that he may give you the grace to put it into practice. Look upon the word of God as one of the greatest graces of heaven, listen to it willingly, and practice it, that it may be for you, what it can and should be, the means of obtaining life everlasting. Amen.

## SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

## 5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

THE THORNS A SYMBOL OF THE RICHES AND PLEASURES OF THIS LIFE.

*"That which fell among thorns are they who have heard, and, going their way, are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit."—Luke 8: 14.*

Remarkable is the explanation which the Lord gives in the gospel for this day of the riches and the pleasures of this life. He compares them to thorns which choke the seed, so that it yields no fruit. St. Gregory the Great says on this passage: "How could our Lord call the riches and pleasures of this life thorns? Thorns sting, wound, and smart, whilst the riches and pleasures of this life are pleasant. We shun thorns, whilst every one wishes to possess riches and to enjoy the pleasures of life." The comparison, indeed, seems at first sight little appropriate, but if we look closer we shall find it very significant. Thorns really are, as we shall see to-day, a symbol of the riches and pleasures of this life, in so far as they—

- I. Sting and painfully wound;*
- II. Generate and harbor every kind of insect;*
- III. Draw to themselves and hold fast everything that comes near them.*

## PART I.

That thorns sting and painfully wound when one comes in contact with them, is known to all. In this relation they resemble riches and pleasures; for both inflict wounds and cause pain.

1. *If we try to possess and enjoy them.*

(a.) *The riches.* Example: *Achab*. How angry and fretful did not this king become when Naboth would not exchange or sell him his vineyard! And casting himself upon his bed, he turned away his face to the wall, and would not eat.—*III. Kings 21: 2-4*. Like this king are all those who have an inordinate desire for riches and temporal goods. How anxiety lest they should not obtain what they hanker after disquiets them! And what vexation and fretfulness and temper, when they see their hope deceived, and their exertions frustrated!

(b.) *The pleasures of life.* Example: *Amnon*, a son of David. He became sick and emaciated, because he sinfully loved *Thamar*, his half-sister, and she resisted his criminal desire.—*II. Kings 13: 1-4*. Impure love still turns the head and heart of people, frequently banishes all cheerfulness, and leads to weariness of life and suicide. Behold the stinging thorns!

2. *If we possess and enjoy them.*

(a.) *The riches.* Example: The parable of the rich man, who, full of disquietude on account of his rich harvest, said within himself: "What shall I do, because I have not where to lay up my fruits."—*Luke 12: 16, 17*. So the rich. Their goods cause them a great deal of trouble. The thought how to employ, how to invest their money most securely and advantageously, how to guard it against robbers and thieves, rests like an incubus on their heart, causes them many sad hours, and deprives them of sound, refreshing sleep. Behold again the stinging thorns!

(b.) *The pleasures of life.* Example: *Amnon*. After he had overpowered and ravished her, "he hated her with an exceeding great hatred, so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her before."—*II. Kings 13: 15*. St. Bernard says: "If a man yield to ambition, he sins, but he sins only like an angel; if he succumb to avarice, he sins, but he only sins like a man; but if he yield to the impure lusts of the flesh, he sins, but sins like a beast." What self-degradation, what prostitution of the dignity of man! The lustful feel this; for this reason they blush for themselves, when they have accomplished the shameful action, and their conscience

cries out to them: You are an abominable, miserable wretch! Behold again the stinging thorns.

3. *If we lose them we must separate ourselves from them.*

(a.) *The riches.* It is very painful to have a tooth pulled, because the tooth has its roots deeply set into the jawbone, and is strongly connected with it and the gum. Some persons cling to their goods with all their soul, therefore they experience great tribulation and woe when these goods are diminished, or when they must separate themselves from them. It is painful to them to have to spend even for the support of their family. How grudgingly they give anything to the Church or for charitable purposes! What a calamity, what a stroke, when their temporal goods are wholly or partly lost. How often do we read in our day of suicides resulting from such loss! And when Death, the inevitable, comes and lays his icy hand on these avaricious persons to tear them from their possessions, from those vain gods they made to themselves, what a torture is theirs! Behold the stinging thorns!

(b.) *The pleasures of life.* Parable of the prodigal son. Whither did his debaucheries bring him? Into the deepest poverty and shame. We see the unfortunate young man hiring himself to herd the swine of a stranger and reduced to such intolerable hunger as to desire to be fed with the husks which were thrown to the hogs. But even such food he was unable to procure.—*Luke 14: 15, etc.* All who give themselves to impurity share this fate more or less: they are overtaken by poverty and need, shame and contumely. "He that joins himself to harlots, will be naught, rottenness and worms shall inherit him, and he shall be lifted up for a greater example, and his name shall be taken away out of the number" (of the living).—*Eccles. 19: 3.* Behold the stinging thorns.

## PART II.

*Thorns harbor every kind of vermin and insect.* So riches and lusts nurture much evil and are the hot-beds of sin and vice of every description.

1. *Riches.* The Apostle says: "They who would become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition, for covetousness is the root of all evils."—*I. Tim. 6. 9.* Does not avarice entice to lying and cheating, perjury, and every kind of injustice, even to robbery and murder? Again, is it not avarice that makes the heart adamant towards the poor and needy; is it not

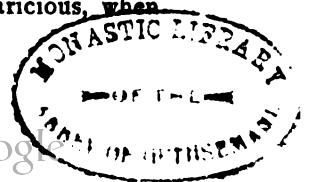
avarice that makes so many men forget God, neglect the duties of religion, desecrate the Sundays and holidays, and lose all sense and feeling for higher and nobler things? Example: Judas. Whither did his insatiable avarice bring him? What a miserable end did he make! St. Basil is right in saying. "Avarice fills the woods with robbers, houses with thieves families with discontentment, the stores with cheats, the halls of justice with perjuries, the hut of innocence with misery and poverty, the eyes of the orphan with tears, the heart of the widow with sighs, the prisons with criminals, and hell with damned souls."

(a.) *The pleasures of life* Impurity leads to the violation of all the commandments of God, to unbelief and heresy, to presumption or despair, to false oaths, to the desecration of Sundays and holidays, to sins against parents and children, to disunion, quarrels, fighting, murder, infidelities, thefts, false promises, and to a vast multitude of sinful thoughts and desires. To what base devices did Henry VIII of England stoop to gratify his lewd desire for Anne Boleyn, one of his virtuous Queen's maids. He perjured himself, and thousands of others he bribed or forced to perjure themselves in order to obtain a dissolution of his marriage with Queen Catherine. But Catherine was his lawful wife, and the Pope could not annul the marriage. Then Henry renounced allegiance to the Pope, proclaimed himself head of the English Church, repudiated Catherine, took Anne to wife, and subsequently murdered her under the form of law in order to be free to take a new one who hit his fancy. Nor was this the end. To his beastly lust he sacrificed two queens (two others were dismissed by him), two cardinals, twenty-one bishops, twelve abbots, five hundred priests, more than a hundred canons of cathedral churches and doctors of divinity, forty-two dukes and other high dignitaries of the state, three hundred of the lower nobility, one hundred and ten ladies, and a great number of citizens, all of whom he executed because they disapproved of his debaucheries and schism, which was a consequence of his adulterous life. Into what an abyss of crimes and vices did voluptuousness plunge this ruler

### PART III.

*Thorns attract and hold fast whatever comes near them.* We frequently notice on thorn-bushes hay which was hauled that way, or the wool of sheep, leaves of trees, even insects and little birds are caught by the thorns, and pierced to death. Riches and lust do something of the same kind.

1. *Riches.* Do you not frequently see how the avaricious, when





buying or selling, endeavor by every trick to make the greatest gain, never scrupling at the swindle, but only too glad to be able in this wise to rob perhaps a very poor fellow-man out of his hard-earned money? Do you not see how they sell things at exorbitant prices to people who must have the article, or, on the other hand, jew down and squeeze out of a seller for a mere song what he may be obliged to part with in order to raise some ready money? Have you not seen the like of these close down on their debtors if these can not meet their payments to the day, thus putting them to unnecessary costs? Yea, you have no doubt seen such hard-hearted persons take advantage of a poor man's temporary inability, to get possession of his place for half its worth, and driving him forth without house or home. The Emperor Commodus was as avaricious as he was cruel. He had a great many of the rich executed, in order to confiscate their property. At the same time he did not disdain the smallest gain. On his birthday, every senator, for himself, his wife, and every one of his children, was obliged to make him a present of two gold pieces. Once he pretended to go to Africa, and, under this pretext, made the state treasurer hand him over a large sum of money, but he never set out for Africa. When, in the year 192, he was again about to have many rich people executed, a deadly drink was administered to him, and the poison not being effective enough, he was murdered. The senate and the people wished to have his carcass dragged with the hooks of the gladiators into the Tiber.

2. *The pleasures of life.* Do they not attract everything? If they will only look into their conscience and own the truth, must not many say: "In voluptuousness I lost my innocence, the peace of my heart, my honor, my health, my temporal goods, and my happiness of life?" Must not many parents complain: "The pleasures of this life have robbed us of the hearts of our children, made them our adversaries, and destroyed all our consolation and joy?" Must not many families sigh: "Voluptuousness has destroyed our whole welfare?" A. D. 310, the Emperor Galerius was afflicted with an abominable disease, caused by impurity, which defied the art of all physicians. Every remedy tried only increased the evil. The upper part of the body withered away or shrunk or dried out, as it were, whilst from the hips to the feet a swelling gave to these parts the form of two pillars. The stench from his ulcers filled the palace, and the vermin that ate him up alive made him an object of pity and horror. He died in despair.

#### PERORATION.

You will understand now why the Lord compares the riches and pleasures of this life to thorns. Thorns sting and wound, riches and

voluptuousness do the same; they wound all who desire them inordinately. possess them wrongfully, or enjoy them sinfully. Thorns harbor every kind of vermin, so riches and voluptuousness are the hot-bed of sin and vice. Thorns attract everything that comes within their reach, and hold it fast, so on the prickly bush of riches and voluptuousness remain hanging the sweat of the poor, virtue and innocence, soul and salvation. O Jesus, grant us the grace of so passing through what is temporal that we may not lose what is eternal! Amen.

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## SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

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# 6. MORAL SKETCH.

WHY THE WORD OF GOD WITH MANY CHRISTIANS YIELDS NO FRUIT.

*"A sower went out to sow his seed."—Luke 8: 5.*

We pastors of souls resemble the sower in the Gospel, who was anything but fortunate in his sowing; for three parts of his seed fell upon bad ground, and yielded no fruit. There hardly ever was a time in which there were more sermons preached than now-a-days. The word of God is preached every Sunday and holiday in every church; the priests devote much time and labor to the preparation of their sermons, they strain their nerves and break their hearts in preaching to those committed to their charge, and what is the result? what is the fruit of their labor? Almost none; the world goes its own way still; the people, instead of coming nearer to God, separate themselves yet further from him, and sink deeper and deeper into sin and vice.

Whence this deplorable fact? I could say a great many things and particularly refer you to the parable in our gospel for this day in which the causes are singled out, why the seed of the word of God remains unfruitful, but I shall confine myself to two, and say: The word of God yields no fruit with many Christians—

- I Because they bring to church what they should leave at home;*
- II Because they leave in the church what they should take home.*

## PART I.

Many Christians bring to church what they should leave at home.

1. *The disregard of the word of God.* Many condemn the word of God, which we priests preach by the commission of Christ. Their whole sanctification of the Sunday consists in assisting at a low mass. Can you say these Christians keep the commandment of God: "Thou shalt keep holy the Sabbath day?" Others, indeed, hear the word of God sometimes, but how do they hear it? Without fervor or devotion. To them, what the priest preaches is not the word of God, but the word of man. If he has any faults or defects, they criticise him and speak ill of him. But are human frailties in the priest impediments to his preaching the word of God? Is wine not wine, whether you drink it out of golden or wooden vessels? If the priests touch without gloves upon certain sins and vices and some feel hit, they become indignant and angry and say: That is not the word of God! that's nonsense! Is what the priest lashes as sin and vice, not branded in the Gospel as sin and vice? Does he command or forbid anything but what Christ has commanded or forbidden? If you wish the word of God to produce fruit in you, it behooves you above all things to leave the disregard of it at home, and hear it with reverence and humility.

2. *Worldly-mindedness.* Wherein does this consist? I shall illustrate it by examples. If you are always thinking only of the goods of this world and thereby forget God and the salvation of your soul, there is worldly-mindedness in your heart. If you desire only to lead a life of pleasure, if in every tribulation you lose your patience, if you abhor mortification, you are worldly-minded. If you are intent upon the increase of your substance, upon honor and influence, and disregard God and your conscience, worldliness rules in you. If you neglect your duties of religion, find no pleasure in the exercises of devotion, seldom make use of the means of grace, go to confession and communion only rarely and that more from compulsion than from a free impulse, worldly-mindedness has entered your heart. If you do no violence to yourself to control your passions, to live humbly, chastely, and meekly, to observe God's commandments, you are worldly-minded. In a word, if you think, speak or act according to the maxims of the world and never gauge your acts by the precepts of the Gospel, if you disdain practices of devotion as the Israelites did the manna, you are worldly-minded.

That Christians who are governed by worldly-mindedness draw no benefit from the word of God, is evident, they are not susceptible of it. If the priest in the pulpit should speak of temporal things and show how one can in a short time acquire honor and riches, or lead a pleasant life, they would listen to him with the greatest interest, but if he speak of the vanity of all earthly things, of penance and conversion, etc., he can put no life into them, they remain cold and disinterested. If he is severe, if he calls down woe upon the world and its devotees

they become angry and call him a fanatic, an imprudent zealot. If they become sometimes convinced of the necessity of repentance and aroused, they lack the power of disengaging themselves from their life of sin, they act like Felix, to whom St Paul preached. You must leave worldly-mindedness at home if you wish the word of God to yield fruit.

3. *Impenitence* Who are impenitent? Those who always live in the state of sin without any earnest will to be truly converted. The impenitent are the unchaste, who carry on sinful familiarities or yield to carnal lust without making any strenuous exertion to amend. Those also must be classed among the impenitent who in their business, trade, or profession render themselves guilty of various acts of injustice, and will not abstain from such acts and repair the injury done; those who are addicted to drunkenness and gambling, and continue these sins from year to year; those who live at enmity with their neighbor and will not be reconciled. If such impenitent Christians hear a sermon, what will it profit them? No more than the obdurate Scribes and Pharisees, to whom Christ preached in vain.

These are three evils which frustrate every salutary effect of the word of God. Reflect and see whether one or the other of these evils has not been the reason why the word of God produced no fruit in you. If such be the case, make now the resolution to remove that which heretofore frustrated the fruitfulness of the word of God.

## PART II.

*Many Christians leave in the church what they should take to their homes.*

1. *The salutary impression which they received at the hearing of the word of God.* Some are convinced of the truth of what is said; they come to the knowledge that on the way which they have traveled heretofore they can not obtain their eternal end. The serious truths which are preached make a great impression upon them; with terror they think of the numberless sins which lie upon their conscience; the thought of death, judgment, and hell fills them with consternation; they say to themselves: No, I must not go on in this way, or I'll be lost forever. Such impressions are indeed good and salutary; they are a seed, which already springs up, and which only needs fair weather to grow and yield fruit. But what comes of it? I'll give you an example of what I mean: There is a family; all are occupied with something: the men are working in the shop, the mother and daughters in the house one is engaged in the kitchen, another doing

up the bed-rooms, others are sewing; the father is making out an account. All at once a band of music strikes up, and, behold, all quit their work, rush to the windows or out of doors, and listen to the music. They are well pleased and enraptured by it. When the music ceases, all go back and continue their work. The music and the impressions which it made on the ear are forgotten little by little.

So with many hearers of the word of God. What is the consequence? Ah! The preacher has poured forth the word of God to such Christians as he would water into a sieve, which retained nothing of the liquid, and in a few minutes will be dry. This must be plain to every one, that the word of God can produce no fruit, because the salutary impressions are not preserved. St. James compares such Christians to a man who looks at his face in a looking-glass, and, going away, remembers not how he looked.

2. *The good resolutions which they made.* In consequence of the salutary impressions which the word of God makes upon some hearers, they make good resolutions: they will curse and blaspheme no more, they will give up their enmity, they will never get drunk again, no more sin against purity, they will pray and receive the Sacraments more frequently. These resolutions deserve all praise, but they have one defect, and it is a great one—they are never put into practice, because they are left in the church and not taken home. That, then, is the reason why so many hearers of the word of God make no progress in the way of amendment and perfection. They are like a weather-cock, which is moved by every breeze of wind, but remains nevertheless in the same spot.

One day, when an old lady returned home from a sermon which she had heard she was met by a gentleman who asked her if the sermon was already over. No, replied the woman. But why then, the gentleman asked again, do the people leave the church before the sermon is ended? Because, said she, the priest left the pulpit. The man, finding this answer strange, said: How! is not the sermon over, if the priest has left the pulpit? The lady said: The preacher has indeed ceased to speak, but the sermon on that account is not ended; on the contrary, it now only begins, for the people must take home the sermon they have heard and practice it. That lady's remark is worthy of our consideration.

#### PERORATION.

Consider that you have to give an account to God for every sermon that is preached to you, and at which you can and should assist, for every sermon is a grace which God gives you for your salvation. Take care lest you abuse this grace to your damnation. Do not bring

to church what you should leave at home, namely, the disregard of the word of God, worldly-mindedness and impenitence, and do not leave in the church what you should take home with you, namely, the salutary impressions made on you, the good resolutions that occur to you, in order that the seed of the word of God may fall in your case upon good ground, and yield fruits for eternal life. Amen.

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## SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

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# 7. MORAL SKETCH.

WHAT WE MUST DO THAT THE WORD OF GOD WHICH IS PREACHED TO US  
MAY PRODUCE FRUIT.

*"The seed is the word of God."—Luke 8: 11.*

The parable in this day's gospel needs no explanation, since Jesus Christ has vouchsafed to explain it, and all you have to do to understand it, is to read it attentively. But, as your pastor, it is my duty to see that you not only rightly understand the parable, but that as far as in me lies you be induced to put its teaching into practice. Knowledge does not suffice; you must practice what you know; the knowledge is necessary only in order that the doing may become possible. That you may be able not only to know, but also to do, I shall give you a short instruction on what you must observe, that the word of God may profit you—

- I. Before the sermon;*
- II. During the sermon;*
- III. After the sermon.*

## PART I.

If the word of God is to profit you, you must—

1. Beforehand prepare yourself for it. What does the farmer do when the seed-time comes around? He cleans the field of brush and stone, ploughs and harrows it. That costs labor, but the work is necessary, because otherwise little or no harvest could be expected. So it is with the spiritual sowing of the word of God. We must clean the field of our heart from all weeds, that is, from inordinate passions and inclinations, that the seed of the divine word may sprout,

spring up, grow, and bring fruit. If, therefore, you go to church to hear the word of God, do as St. Bernard did at every visit to the church. He stopped a moment at the church door, recollected himself, and then said within himself: "Remain here, you earthly thoughts and cares, for I must now occupy myself with my God and the salvation of my soul; when I return I will take you back, as far as it necessary." Banish all your temporal thoughts and cares, and suppress all inordinate emotions and inclinations, that you may devote yourselves untrammelled to the service of God and the business of your salvation.

2. *Have a hearty desire to be instructed in the Christian religion and to be guided to piety.* He that is not hungry will eat little or nothing of the bread and meat that is set before him; the bread, therefore, be it ever so palatable, will not do him any good. So it is with the divine food, the word of God. Therefore, Jesus pronounces those blessed who hunger and thirst after justice.—*Matt. 5.* He that has no longing after the word of God, gives us to understand that he is worldly-minded, and such a one may be preached to a hundred times, yet he shall remain the self-same worldling. Examine yourselves and see whether you hear the word of God with a true Christian zeal, or only from habit or compulsion.

3. *Invoke the Holy Ghost.*

(a.) *For the preacher;* for, "neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth; but God, who giveth the increase."—*I. Cor. 3: 7.* Let the priest preach ever so well, he will effect nothing, if the Holy Ghost do not enlighten his hearers and render them susceptible of good. He may labor all the night, but shall catch nothing. St. Augustine: "We may call, and, with much noise, exhort to good, but if there be none to teach inwardly, all noise on our part is useless." For this reason St Paul exhorts the Ephesians: "Pray for me, that speech may be given me, that I may open my mouth with confidence, to make known the mystery of the Gospel."—*Ephs. 6: 19.*

(b.) *For yourselves.* We need the grace of God for everything good. "Without me (without my grace) you can do nothing."—*John 14: 5.* The chief means for the obtaining of divine grace is prayer. "Your Father from heaven will give the good spirit to them that ask him."—*Luke 2: 13.* For this reason we invoke the Holy Ghost, the Giver of grace, before the sermon. As, according to the gospel for this day, the devil tries to destroy the fruit of the word of God by taking it out of the hearts of the hearers, lest, believing, they should be saved, so you must be earnest in soliciting the Holy Ghost for his assistance

4. *Be present from the beginning of the sermon.* He who comes when half the sermon is over will profit very little by the rest, because he does not participate in the invocation of the Holy Ghost, on whom the fruit of the sermon especially depends, and because he has not heard the principal object of the sermon, its connection, and, perhaps, just what would have been most important for him; again, because he violates the honor due to God, disregarding his holy word so much that he does not care to hear it entire. It is God who speaks through the preacher and announces to us his holy word. Who is to wait? God or man? The late coming-in also disturbs those who are present, and hinders more or less the utility of the word of God in their regard. Be at church in time.

## PART II.

That the sermon may profit you, you must hear it—

1. *With attention.* If some one speak to me and I pay no attention to his words, I may as well be a thousand miles away. The same applies to the Sunday sermon. Mere bodily presence is good for nothing. Inattention at the sermon offends also against the veneration due to God. A person when talking feels aggrieved and insulted when he sees that no attention is paid to him; and will God, think you, be quite indifferent when he sees his holy word so utterly disregarded that persons will not condescend to pay it any attention? Strange that it should be so very difficult to get the attention of Christians to the word of God. It is only too true what a learned man once said: "Many bring their ears to the sermon, but not their heart." With many who are present at a sermon the mind is absent; it is at home, at the daily occupations, or in some other place; or if it remain in the church, it is captivated by other things, it is turned to those present, and is occupied perhaps with the style of bonnets or other wearing apparel, or delights in sinful imaginations and desires; and thus it happens that when the sermon is over they do not remember a word of it. There are not a few who regularly take a nap during the sermon. When the priest begins to speak, they close their eyes, begin to yawn, and are soon asleep; the sermon is for them a season of repose, and they sleep till the priest is done speaking. What profit will they have from the best sermon?

2. *With humility.* God comes with his grace only into the hearts in which he finds humility. "God resisteth the proud, and giveth his grace to the humble.—*James* 4: 6. Christ says: "I give thanks to thee, O Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones."—*Luke* 10: 21. The Christian



doctrine, according to these words, makes a salutary impression only upon the humble, and produces fruit in them. Jesus indicates this truth, saying: "The poor have the Gospel preached to them;" by the poor we must here understand those souls who, in a vivid knowledge of their sinfulness and impotence, humble themselves before God, receive his word with a believing heart, and regulate their life accordingly. How necessary it is to hear the word of God with humility, the example of the Jewish people teaches. The humble among them, especially the common people, as the Apostles and disciples of Jesus were, received the Gospel joyfully and became believers; but the proud Scribes and Pharisees persevered in their unbelief and impenitence. So it is to-day. The common people, who are humble, profit by sermons; the proud, on the contrary, who pride themselves on their learning, disdain the word of God, criticise the language, pay more attention to the manner of the delivery than to the matter of the discourse, or if they do pay attention, it is not with the wish or hope of being instructed and converted.

3. *With a heart solicitous for salvation*, that is with the intention—

(a.) *Of being better instructed in religion*. In matters of religion you can always learn something, and if we should reach the age of a hundred years, we should never cease to perfect ourselves in the science of salvation, according to the admonition of the Apostles: "Increase in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."—II. *Pet.* 3: 18. In our days particularly, a profound knowledge of religion is necessary, in order not to be led astray by the specious arguments which unbelievers and sectaries bring against the Catholic Church.

(b.) *Of amending and perfecting ourselves*. This is the principal object of Christian sermons. Sinners are to be converted, the lukewarm to be awakened to fervor, the weak to be strengthened, and the imperfect to be led to perfection. This principal object the hearers of the word of God should always have in view, because, without exception, they are themselves either sinners, or lukewarm, or weak, or imperfect. He who hears sermons with any other intention, as, for example, to give himself the appearance of a fervent Christian, or gratify his curiosity, abuses the word of God.

### PART III.

That the sermon you hear may profit you, you must, after the sermon—

1. *Meditate on what you have heard*. It is not enough to put the food

into the mouth, it must also be masticated and then passed into the stomach and be digested, for only so it preserves, nourishes, and strengthens the body. It is the same with the word of God. After having received it into ourselves by hearing, we must digest it that it may nourish our souls, that is, we must meditate on it, apply it to our individual case, and keep it in memory. So the Blessed Virgin Mary did, for she kept all the words of Jesus in her heart. It is not a good sign when, right after the sermon, you yield to distractions, speak only worldly, light, or perhaps sinful things, and forget the word of God entirely. How can the word of God yield fruit in such cases?

2 *Make good resolutions*, practice what has been preached to you. Every sermon contains, not only general, but also special instructions and admonitions to virtue. We must, therefore, make general and special good purposes; *general*, resolving earnestly after every sermon again to regulate our life according to the principles of the Gospel; *special*, resolving to avoid some particular fault, to perform some particular good action.

3. *Execute the good resolutions we have made.* That is the principal point; "for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified."—*Rom. 2: 13*. "If a man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he shall be compared to a man beholding his natural countenance in a glass: for he beheld himself, and went his way, and presently forgot what manner of man he was."—*James 1: 23, 24*. What does it profit a man to behold himself in a glass, if he do not wash off the filth he sees on his face? What does it profit a man to believe well, and live ill? The Jews listened to the discourses of Jesus, but as they did not live according to them, they were rejected. He who hears the sermon, but changes not his perverse mind and conversation, will be judged and punished more severely, for "the servant that knoweth the will of his master, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."—*Luke 12: 47*.

#### PERORATION.

You know now what you must do, that the word of God which is preached to you may profit you. Prepare yourselves for every sermon that you hear by purifying your hearts from all worldly distractions and cares, from all inordinate inclinations and desires, excite a sincere desire of allowing yourselves to be taught and corrected by Christian instruction, and, for that end, implore the Holy Ghost to give you his grace. Always hear the word of God with attention, humility, and a heart solicitous for salvation; meditate on what has been preached to you, make good resolutions, and put them into practice. "Blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it."—*Luke 11: 28*. Amen.

## QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

## 1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

## THE NECESSITY, THE QUALITIES, AND THE DURATION OF CHARITY

**EPISTLE.** *I. Cor.* 13: 1-13. Brethren: If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity is patient, is kind: charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth: beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect shall come, that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away the things of a child. We see now through a glass in an obscure manner: but then face to face. Now I know in part: but then I shall know even as I am known. And now there remain faith, hope, and charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity.

In the primitive ages of Christianity God frequently communicated extraordinary gifts to the believers, such as the gift of tongues, of foretelling future events, healing the sick, and raising the dead. Such gifts God had also granted to the Christians at Corinth, which, however, some of them used not as they should. They gloried in those gifts, and exalted themselves over those who did not possess them. This evidently was pride. Others, who had not received such gifts, or only in a less measure, were aggrieved, and envied their more favored brethren. This also was wrong and sinful. St. Paul, then, saw it fitting to instruct the Corinthians on those extraordinary gifts, and to explain to them, that they are without any merit whatever unless they be united with charity. In this epistle he speaks *on the love of our neighbor*.

- I. On its necessity;*
- II. On its qualities;*
- III. On its duration*

## PART I.

To convince us of the necessity of brotherly love, the Apostle assures us that the greatest spiritual gifts and miracles, even the most heroic virtues and good works, are valueless before God and useless for heaven, without this love of our neighbor.

1. "*If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*" The charity of which the Apostle here speaks is the love of our neighbor, linked with that of God. Without this charity the most unlimited and perfect gift of speech is useless, and he who is endowed with it has as little merit as have bells and musical instruments, when they give the tones willed by men. The Apostle and many other Saints, as St. Francis Xavier, St. Dominic, St. Vincent Ferrier, spoke quite fluently foreign languages which they had never studied, but they did not become Saints, nor save their souls, by this gift of tongues, but by their virtues, and especially by their love of God and that of their neighbor. If we understood and spoke all the languages of the world, and had not charity, we should have as little merit before God as a dumb man, whose mouth never utters an audible, articulate sound.

2. "*If I should have prophecy and should know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*" The meaning of this is: If a man should have the gift of foretelling future events to such a degree as never prophet had before, so that he knew everything hidden and future; if he had a knowledge embracing all that is natural and supernatural; finally, if he had faith in its full perfection and in all its strength, so that he could work miracles that would astound even Moses, but was at the same time destitute of charity, he should be nothing in the eyes of God, and should not have the least merit for eternity. Charity rates higher than all knowledge, and a simple-minded peasant, who loves God and his neighbor, is more in the eyes of God than the most exalted professor in whose heart pride, not charity, dwells. Nay, charity is more valuable than even wonder-working faith. It is probable that Judas himself performed miracles, but, being destitute of charity, he was damned. If, therefore, for the love of God you assist the poor and needy in their necessities, or forgive an offense magnanimously, you are doing more than if you should raise the dead to life.

3. "*And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me*

*nothing* " The Apostle goes still farther, and says that the most excellent good works, even those which are highly commended in the Sacred Scripture, such as alms and martyrdom, are worthless without charity. Let me illustrate this by an example taken from the Lives of the Saints. Two Christians, Sapricius and Nicephorus, living at Antioch, were great friends for some time, but, for some unknown reason, fell out, and lived in enmity. Sapricius afterwards was cast into prison on account of his faith, and condemned to death. The Pagans endeavored, by glowing promises and various torments, to shake his faith, but he remained steadfast, and was therefore led out to the place of execution. Nicephorus, hearing it, hastens to him, and casting himself at his feet, implores his forgiveness, and calls him a martyr. He repeats his petition several times, and always more urgently, but in vain; Sapricius turns his eyes away from him, and even on his way to death he will not hear of forgiveness. Now behold the punishment. God withdraws his grace from the unforgiving soul. Sapricius, who up to this time had so firmly confessed his faith, now becomes an apostate, he sacrifices to the idols, and loses the crown of martyrdom. Now, let us suppose that this irreconcilable Sapricius had really died for his faith, would he have obtained a place among the martyrs in heaven? No, as a martyr of the devil, he would have been cast into hell. How necessary is the love of our neighbor! how useless the most heroic virtues, and even martyrdom, without charity! Hence, St. Augustine is right in saying: "You may have all whatsoever, if you have not charity, it profits you nothing; and if you have nothing but charity, you have fulfilled the law."

## PART II.

St. Paul now mentions the qualities that the love of our neighbor should have, and thus enables us to know with certainty whether we have it or not. Charity, he says,

1. *Is patient, is kind.* He who has charity, bears with the weaknesses and frailties of his fellow-men, complains not impatiently of what he it obliged to endure from them, does not injure them, but does them good. Do you love your neighbor in such a manner?

2. *Charity envieth not.* He that has charity, wishes well to all, he rejoices when things go well with them, and he is grieved when some evil befalls them. How many are there among us who are envious, and, therefore, destitute of one of the principal qualities of charity!

3. *Dealeth not perversely.* He that has charity, acts not impetuously, presumptuously, or hastily, because he is not governed by his passions,

but by the spirit of God We also must guard ourselves against imprudence and over-hastiness in words and actions, because otherwise we shall frequently sin against our neighbor.

4. *It is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own.* He who has charity, never elevates himself above others, though they be less than he, does not look down upon others with pride and contempt, acts not from self-interest, but rather suffers loss himself, than seek gain and advantage at the expense of others, especially the poor. Does your conscience not reproach you with having sinned against the love of your neighbor?

5. *Is not provoked to anger, beareth all things, endureth all things.* He who has charity, is meek, not excitable, fosters no anger or ill-will in his heart, bears patiently with his neighbor, and even receives offenses with equanimity. Oh, how small is the number of Christians whose charity has these attributes!

6. *Thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.* He who loves his neighbor, judges not rashly, never misconstrues his actions, takes no pleasure in the evil that is done, but rather grieves when he hears or sees that some one does wrong, and rejoices in good actions by whomsoever performed.

7. *It believeth all things, hopeth all things.* He that has charity, thinks well of his neighbor, and always hopes for the best; despairs not of the greatest sinner, but loves to think that he will eventually amend his life. It is, therefore, a sign that we love our neighbor little or not at all, if we will not believe the good we hear of him without striking and convincing proofs, and are inclined to think rather ill than well of him.

These are the qualities which the true love of our neighbor should have. If we look up to the love of Jesus on the cross, we find in it all these qualities. The Saints imitated Jesus herein. Let us follow them. "He that loveth not, abideth in death."—*I. John 3: 14.*

### PART III.

How long is this charity to last?

1. *"Charity never faileth, whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed."*

(a.) The gifts of the human mind exist only in the present life. They shall cease hereafter, when the end for which they were given shall have been attained. They were given to serve as evidence of the divinity of Christianity; and as the state of imperfection for which

they are intended shall have an end, they too shall cease like a constantly produced effect with its producing cause. *Prophecy* will cease, for hereafter there will be no future that could be revealed. The *gift of tongues* shall cease, for hereafter the blessed shall not speak in language, that is, with the tongue, as we now do. Their language will be an inarticulate, spiritual one, and *one* only. They shall know and understand one another by mutually beholding and contemplating one another, as it were, in a bright mirror. *Knowledge*, such as it exists upon earth, will cease, for in the life to come none shall instruct, or be instructed, search, or study, because every one shall know what is required for his happiness.

(b.) As a reason why prophecy and knowledge shall cease hereafter, the Apostle indicates particularly their deficiency. All prophecies are more or less defective, because their contents, for the most part, are obscure, and because they disclose but very little of the future. No less defective is all human knowledge. That which we know, in proportion to what we do not know, is very little, and even our knowledge of that which we fancy we do know is very defective and imperfect. For this reason St. Paul describes all knowledge and prophecy here as imperfect, and says that our present state stands in relation to the future like that of a child to a man, that all our knowledge here below is imperfect, and, as it were, childish; but in the other world it shall be ripe, like that of a man; that here we see as through a glass, in an obscure manner, but there we shall see as it is in reality and truth. A child that dies immediately after Baptism, shall have in heaven an incomparably greater knowledge in natural and supernatural things than the most renowned scientist or the most learned philosopher possesses here below.

2. *Faith and hope shall also cease hereafter.* There can be no necessity for faith hereafter, because there we shall see and know all that we here believe. The blessed in heaven possess in eternal security what they so long hoped for upon earth; but charity remains for ever. They love God and one another, and find in this love their highest felicity. *Faith, hope, and charity are three sisters.* Faith and hope remain upon earth, charity enters the other world, unites itself most intimately with God, and is happy in him and with him through all eternity.

#### PERORATION.

Charity, then, is the greatest and most necessary of all virtues, for it imprints on all virtues the seal of God's pleasure and meritoriousness; and whilst all extraordinary spiritual gifts, even faith and hope, are of a perishable nature and end with this life, charity never fails,

but has, as God, an eternal existence. Love God above all things, and your neighbor as yourself. Let charity cast deep roots in your heart, and love friend as well as foe, speak ill of no one, revile none, but show in word and work that you are disciples of Jesus, by loving the brethren. Blessed are you, if you conscientiously keep this great commandment; for "he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him."—*I. John 4: 16.* Amen.

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## QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

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GOSPEL. *St. Luke 18: 31-43.* At that time: Jesus took unto him the twelve, and said to them: Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man. For he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon: and after they have scourged him, they will put him to death, and the third day he shall rise again: And they understood none of these things, and this word was hid from them, and they understood not the things that were said. Now it came to pass that when he drew nigh to Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside, begging. And when he heard the multitude passing by, he asked what this meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out saying. Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. And they that went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace. But he cried out much more: Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood and commanded him to be brought to him: And when he was come near, he asked him, saying: What wilt thou that I do to thee? But he said. Lord, that I may see. And Jesus said to him: Receive thy sight. thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he saw, and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

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## 2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

### JESUS FORETELLS HIS PASSION, AND HEALS A BLIND MAN.

We stand at the portal of the forty days' fast, which begins next Wednesday. The Church could not have chosen a more appropriate gospel than that which I have just read to you. It treats of the Passion of Christ, and behold, just this mystery of divine love is to be the principal subject of our veneration during the holy season of Lent. It also speaks of a blind man, who was healed miraculously by Jesus. There are always blind, spiritually blind men, to be found, especially during the days of the Carnival. Blind indeed are all those who, instead of preparing themselves during these days for the holy Lenten



season, give full scope to their passions, and renew the excesses and vices of the ancient Pagans. Oh, that these blind persons would know their wretched condition, and, in humility and contrition, have recourse to Jesus in order to obtain from him that healing which he is ever ready to impart and which the blind man of Jericho so happily received!

Let us consider the gospel of this day, the contents of which is divided into two points:—

- I. Jesus foretells his Passion;*
- II. Jesus heals a blind man.*

#### PART II.

*1. Jesus took unto him the twelve, and said to them: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man."*

(a.) The twelve whom he took with him on his journey to Jerusalem, and to whom he foretold his Passion, are the twelve Apostles. Jesus had frequently during his life gone to Jerusalem; now he went for the last time, for in a few days he was about to suffer and die for us. When he says that all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning him, he refers to his Passion and death. The prophets, especially David and Isaiah, minutely described, not only his life, but also his Passion. So Isaiah foretells (chap. 53) that there is in him neither beauty nor comeliness; that they thought him, as it were, a leper, as one struck by God and afflicted, and reputed with the wicked; and David, that they have dug his hands and feet, and have numbered all his bones; that they parted his garments amongst them, and upon his vesture they cast lots; that he cried out, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me: that they laughed him to scorn, and gave him vinegar and gall to drink.—*Psalms 21 and 68* These and all other predictions of the prophets were accomplished in Jesus.

(b.) Jesus knew very well that the Jews had decreed his death, and yet he went up to Jerusalem and made there a public and solemn entry. He did this—

(1.) To show that he was truly the Messiah, and to give to the Jews an opportunity to do homage to him as the Messiah, that, if they persevered in their unbelief, they should have no excuse. God gives the necessary grace for salvation to all, but not all embrace it. Remember the Jews, and reflect on the terrible consequences which the abuse of

divine grace had for them, and make good use of all the graces which God gives you for your salvation.

(2.) To show to the Jews that without his will they could not have executed their nefarious design of killing him. On God depends the success of whatever man proposes. If, therefore, you see the wicked oppress the Church and do much evil, be sure that they could not do it without God's permission. Everything, however, which God ordains or permits, will turn out well for those that love him. This must be our consolation.

*2. For he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon; and after they have scourged him, they will put him to death, and the third day he shall rise again.*

(a.) Jesus foretells his Passion and death in plain words. Why does he do so? To strengthen his disciples in their belief in him, that they might not be led astray when they should see him in his extreme contumely. They could say: What Jesus suffers comes not accidentally, nor without his will and knowledge; he foretold it; he is, notwithstanding his humiliation, the Son of God. The sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, far from weakening our belief in his divinity, only strengthen it. But it may be objected: The gift of prophecy was not necessary for Jesus to foretell his Passion and death, for he knew that the chiefs among the Jews bitterly hated him and would endeavor at any cost to do away with him. But Jesus foretells his Passion, not in general and indefinite terms, but very exactly and circumstantially, and especially his resurrection from the dead. All this is an incontrovertible proof of his omniscience, and, consequently, of his Godhead.

(b.) Jesus foretells his Passion with all quietude, although by his omniscience the unutterable pains which he was to endure, stood vividly before his eyes. Why? Above all, that he might not discourage and terrify his Apostles; then to manifest his resignation to the will of God; and lastly, to teach us that the just man has no reason to fear death. If we have to suffer, let us keep quiet in the presence of those around us, in order to give them good example and to spare them as much as possible unnecessary sadness.

(c.) Jesus spoke, not only once, but frequently, of his Passion and death, in order to give us to understand that they were always before his mind in such a way that he thought of them, whether he preached, worked, or rested. This should encourage us frequently to meditate on the Passion and death of Jesus. Meditation on the Passion and death of our Lord was from the beginning the school in which

the Saints learned Christian perfection. St. Paul was so constant in meditation on the Passion of Christ that he could say of himself, that he knew nothing but Christ crucified.—*I. Cor. 22.* St. Philip Neri spent some time every day before the image of the Crucified, in meditation on the Passion of Christ, and St. Philip's biographers say that he learned more from this than from any other book. Nothing is more profitable than meditation on the Passion and death of Jesus. St. Bonaventure says: "If you wish to step from virtue to virtue, from grace to grace, from good to better, meditate daily and with all possible devotion, on the Passion of Christ, for nothing produces in the soul so complete a sanctification as the contemplation of the Passion of Christ." Sanctify, then, the forty days' fast by meditating daily, or at least on Sundays and holidays, on the Passion and death of Christ.

3. *And they understood none of these things; and this word was hid from them; and they understood not the things that were said.*

Jesus speaks plainly of his Passion, death, and resurrection, and yet his Apostles understand him not. How is this? Because, being themselves Jews, they had not yet wholly divested themselves of the prejudices of their nation, and only with difficulty can they be brought to think of the promised Messiah in lowliness and contumely, in suffering and death. They still cling to the notion of earthly power and majesty. Believing him to be really the promised Messiah, what he says of his Passion and death is quite unintelligible to them, and they persuade themselves that what he says must refer to another person, or be understood only figuratively. Moreover, the Apostles were yet worldly-minded; this was the chief reason why they understood not their divine Master, for the worldly-minded man comprehends not that which is supernatural and divine. After the Holy Ghost had descended upon them on the feast of Pentecost, the scales fell from their eyes, and they understood all that he had told them.

Be not governed by your passions, nor by the world, nor by the spirit of the world, but by the Spirit of God, who speaks to you through the Church, that you may be protected from all error and always walk in the path of virtue and truth.

## PART II.

*Now it came to pass, that when he drew nigh to Jericho a certain blind man sat by the wayside, begging. And when he heard the multitude passing by he asked what this meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.*

(a.) "A blind man, a poor man." This adage is only too true, and the poorest man feels not so unhappy as a blind man, to whom the

glorious sun never rises, but who continually languishes in the darkness and the shadow of death. Be thankful to God for the gift of sight, for it is the greatest of all temporal goods, but make a good use thereof. Beware of the sins of the eye; these sins have caused many, many, to be cast into everlasting darkness. Pray daily with David: "Turn away my eyes, that they may not behold vanity."—*Ps. 118: 37.*

(b.) We can not blame the blind man for begging, because he was poor, and on account of his blindness he could not earn his daily bread. If you meet a poor blind person, think of the blind man of Jericho, and the goodness of Jesus displayed towards him, and give him for God's sake some alms.

(c.) The blind man was right in asking the people what it meant. If he had not asked, he should not have been told that Jesus was passing by, and the consequence would have been that he should not have invoked his mercy and found help. Let this be a lesson to you, in every doubt and uncertainty, to ask the advice of prudent and well-meaning persons. This is always good and expedient, and frequently prevents loss.

*2. And he cried out, saying: Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. And they that went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace. But he cried out much more: Son of David, have mercy on me.*

(a.) They had only told the blind man that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, but he calls Jesus David's Son, and cries out to him, not merely to give him an alms, but to free him from his blindness. Thereby he professes his belief in Christ as the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world. This man, though physically blind, saw far better, according to the spirit, than many of those whose sight was good, but who were spiritually blind, not acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God and the promised Messiah. The number of the spiritually blind is very great in our days, and includes not only unbelievers and heretics, but also those Catholics who disregard the duties of their religion and state of life, and live in impenitence.

(b.) Those that went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace, either because they thought that this crying out would molest Jesus, or because it was irksome to them. If anything in your fellow-men, especially in those of your own poor and sick, should be troublesome, preserve Christian charity and patience, "for charity is," as we read in this day's epistle, "patient and kind, beareth all things, endureth all things." Reflect that God has also patience with us.

(c.) The blind man was not to be prevented from crying out; th-

more he was rebuked, the louder he cried. Be you also constant in that which is good, and grow not discouraged when, on the way of virtue, you meet with obstacles. If the blind man had been intimidated by the rebukes of the people and held his peace, Jesus probably would have passed by without helping him. Perseverance shows earnestness, and is crowned with success.

3. *And Jesus stood and commanded him to be brought to him. And when he was come near, he asked him, saying: What wilt thou that I do to thee? But he said: Lord, that I may see.*

(a.) Jesus allows himself to be invoked repeatedly without seeming to notice. Finally he asks: What wilt thou? although he knew beforehand what the man wanted. God always acts in this way; he knows our necessities, and is ever ready to help us, but he wishes that, by earnest, constant prayer, by the avowal of our misery, we exercise confidence, patience, and humility, in order to make ourselves fit for and worthy of his help. "Thou shalt call and the Lord shall hear; thou shalt cry, and he shall say: Here I am."—*Is.* 58: 9.

(b.) The words of the blind man, "that I may see," comprise the principal qualities of a good prayer; that is, the acknowledgment of our misery and helplessness, and, therefore, humility, belief in the power of Jesus, and confidence in his goodness. Let us always present our corporal and spiritual necessities with humility, faith, and confidence, and, like the blind man, we shall obtain the object of our prayer.

4. *And Jesus said to him: Receive thy sight; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he saw, and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.*

(a.) Here, again, Jesus manifests his divine power. He merely says: "Receive thy sight," and on a sudden the blind man sees. Oh! what a consolation for us that we have a Redeemer who is mighty to succor us in all that concerns body and soul.

(b.) Jesus says: "Thy faith hath made thee whole." Wherein does this faith consist? In this, that we receive all that Jesus teaches us by his holy Catholic Church as divine truth, hold it firmly, and regulate our life according to its dictates. Where this faith is wanting, there prayer is not well pleasing to God, there they wait in vain to be heard. And this faith is wanting to many.

(c.) The blind man showed himself grateful for the great gift he had received, for he glorified God, and followed Jesus. Let us likewise, by

a faithful following of Jesus, show gratitude for the numberless graces and benefits which we have received.

## PERORATION.

Let us make to-day two good resolutions:

1. During Lent frequently to meditate on the Passion and death of Jesus Christ, that we may bring forth worthy fruits of penance.
2. To receive the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist, and live for heaven, not for earth, that is, show that though dwelling on earth we are leading a heavenly life. Amen.

## QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

## 3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

## ORIGINAL SIN.

*"A certain blind man sat by the wayside, begging."*—Luke 18: 35.

The blind man mentioned in the gospel of this day, who sat by the wayside begging, signifies the whole human race, which, in the person of Adam, was cast out of paradise and plunged into the deepest misery, from which it could be redeemed only by Jesus Christ, the God-Man. As the first pages of the Sacred Scripture tell us, our first parents in paradise ate of the forbidden fruit, and thereby sinned grievously against their Lord and Creator. This sin, with all its fatal consequences, passed unto all men. So that, with the exception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, every one is conceived and born in sin. This is an article of faith and shall be the subject of our reflection to-day. I shall speak on original sin, and instruct you—

- I. *On its existence;*
- II. *On its consequences.*

## PART I.

*That original sin exists, is evident—*

I. *From the Sacred Scriptures.*

(a.) *"Who can make him clean that is conceived of unclean seed? Is it not thou who only art?"*—Job 14: 4. Job here says that he is unclean

and contaminated even in the very source of his being. He thus enunciates the dogmatic truth of faith on original sin, and this passage is so explained by the most ancient Fathers of the Church, such as Clement, Cyril, Basil, and Augustine.

(b.) "*Behold, I was conceived in iniquities; and in sins did my mother conceive me.*"—*Ps.* 50: 7. Now, David was born in lawful wedlock and of pious parents; the words, therefore, "in sins did my mother conceive me," can not be referred to his pious mother, as if she had sinned at his conception; they must, on the contrary, as all the Jewish and Christian interpreters of the Sacred Scriptures say, be understood of David himself, as referring to his inheritance of original sin, in which, like all other men, he was conceived.

(c.) "*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death, and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned.*"—*Rom.* 5: 12. The Apostle deduces the reason why all men must die, expressly from sin; but, as children also die, who personally can not have sinned, it is evident that they have inherited the sin of Adam, therefore are contaminated by original sin. The Apostle says: "All have sinned in Adam;" this does not mean that all have imitated Adam in sin, that all have transgressed the commandments like him, for, besides the children, there are not a few adults who lead a very holy life from infancy. All can have sinned in Adam, in so far as his sin has passed upon them.

(d.) "*We were by nature the children of wrath, even as the rest.*"—*Ephes.* 2: 3. How could we by nature, that is, from birth, or rather from the first moment of our conception, be children of wrath, men in whom God is not pleased, if we came not into the world in the state of original sin? We were, therefore, contaminated with it from the first moment of our existence.

## 2. From Christian tradition.

(a.) This dogma of our faith regarding original sin was already held by the holy Fathers and ecclesiastical writers of the first centuries. Tatian: "Because of the disobedience of the first man, we lost the Spirit of God, the perfect justice and holiness."—*Orat. ad Græc.* 18. Irenæus: "Christ acquired salvation for us, so that we received in Christ again what we had lost through Adam, namely, the image and likeness of God."—*Iren. lib. III., cap.* 20. St. Augustine who wrote whole books on original sin, exclaimed to the Pelagian Julian: "I have not invented original sin; the Catholic Church from the beginning has admitted it; but you, who reject it, are an innovator."—*Lib. 2, de nupt. et concup. c.* 12.

(b.) The practice of the Church proves the existence of original sin. From the very beginning of Christianity it was customary to baptize newly-born children. Since the Church judged baptism necessary for the salvation of those children, she evidently must have believed that they were contaminated with original sin, from which they were to be cleansed by baptism and thereby enabled to enter into heaven. To this may be added the adjurations which the Church always practiced at the baptism of new-born babes. If they were not already contaminated by original sin and subject to the dominion of the devil, these adjurations would be not only culpable superstition, but a dishonor to God. If the child were stainless coming into the world, the child was God's. Why, then, should the words of exorcism and adjuration be spoken, in order to deliver the child from the power of the devil?

3. *From the belief of all, even Pagan nations.* If we journey from country to country all the world over, and inquire among all Pagan nations, we shall everywhere find the plainest vestiges of a belief in the original fall of the human race. The legends of all Pagan nations unite substantially in this, that in the beginning the people lived innocently and most happily, but that a woman, at the instigation of the evil spirit in the form of a serpent, sinned and seduced her husband also; that this sin consisted in the eating of a forbidden fruit; that the cause of the sin was a vain desire of knowledge; and that, in consequence of this sin, the people were cast out of paradise and punished with various miseries.

(a.) The legend of the *Hindoos*. According to the legends of this people, *Schiva* (God), to try *Brahma* (Adam), made the blossom of a tree fall from heaven. Brahma, who wished to be like God, took the blossom and believed that he was really God. But God punished him, cast him out of paradise into the abyss, where he was to do penance, but, on account of his repentance, he was pardoned. Moreover, it is said that the first woman, who proceeded from the body of Brahma, enticed and seduced him (Brahma) to sin, and his body therefore became fog and darkness, that is, a mortal body subject to corruption. Lastly, the *Hindoos* believe that the wife of the *Schiva* fought the serpent, or evil spirit, crushed his head with her foot, and cut it off, and that she shall come again at the end, to destroy the evil spirit, and restore the government to the old (God) *Schiva*.

(b.) The legend of the *Chinese*. These call the woman the first fountain and the root of all evil. One of their poets says: "We inhabited a happy region, but a woman cheated us out of it. Everything was subject to us, a woman plunged us into slavery; she hates innocence, and loves vice. The wise man built a wall round about vice,



but the woman, who wished to know everything better, tore it down. She is now like a bird whose song announces death." In this woman, Eve is manifestly described, who, blinded by the devil, desired the knowledge of good and evil, and wished to be like God, and on that account brought death on herself and on her posterity.

(c.) The legend of the *ancient Germans*. A woman was the cause why the happy life in Asgard (paradise) had an end. As long as the woman was not there, the gods and men lived in friendship, and abundance and joy prevailed. But when the woman came, who was in compact with bewitching spirits and belonged to the race of giants who rebelled against God, all happiness was over, and the friendship between God and man ceased. The result was that God put down the degenerate race, and rejected it. Asgard's kingdom of felicity (paradise) was broken up forever, and the evil spirits obtained a certain power upon earth. (Lucken, Traditions of Mankind.) We see here again the history of the fall, which was caused by a woman, and called down the chastisements of God upon the whole human race.

## PART II.

The consequences of original sin are,

1. *The loss of sanctifying grace, of the filiation of God, and of right and title to the kingdom of heaven.*

(a.) As original sin defiles man interiorly and makes him bad, God, infinitely holy, can love him no more, but must be displeased with him. The loss of sanctifying grace or of the love of God is a necessary consequence of original, as well as of every other grievous sin. Hence, the Council of Trent says: "If any one affirm that the man Adam, after he had transgressed the law of God, has not lost at once sanctifying grace with original justice and incurred God's indignation, or has lost them only for himself, but not also for us, let him be anathema."—5 Sess.

2. The loss of the *filiation of God* is necessarily connected with sin. God surely can no more regard them as children who have so grievously offended him, nor be to them any longer an affectionate father. As long as man is defiled with original sin, he can not pray to God with filial confidence: "Our Father, who art in heaven." The filiation of God we have obtained again through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer; wherefore the Apostle says: "You have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father!)"—Rom. 8: 15.

(a.) Another consequence of original sin is *the loss of the right to heaven*, for only children have a claim to the inheritance of their father. But because, through sin, we ceased to be children of God, we have therefore no longer any right to claim the heavenly goods as an inheritance. Therefore we must, in order to be able to enter into heaven, be again made children of God by holy baptism, the bath of regeneration, as Jesus teaches: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he can not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—*John 3: 5*. Original sin, then, has, as the most renowned divines say, entailed upon us only the loss of heaven, and not eternal damnation, as a consequence. Pope Innocent III. says: "The punishment of original sin is the deprivation of the sight of God, but the punishment of actual sin is the eternal torment of hell." Sts. Bonaventure and Thomas of Aquin teach the same. According to this doctrine, children that die without baptism are indeed excluded from heaven, but are not condemned to hell.

### 3. *Ignorance, concupiscence, and inclination to evil.*

(a.) Original sin weakened our understanding, so that it can learn supernatural things only with great exertion and imperfectly, and is exposed to all kinds of errors. How fatally original sin operates upon the understanding we can easily perceive from the horrible aberrations of the Gentiles; in the course of time they lost almost all knowledge of God, could not distinguish between right and wrong, between virtue and vice, adored men and beasts and ugly idols of wood and stone as God.

(b.) If we were still in the state of original justice, our will would be powerful, and we could easily do what is good, because we should never be assailed by passion, nor have the least inclination to evil. But as we are now constituted, there reigns in us concupiscence, which, though in itself no sin, yet always vitiates every good action, and is continually drawing us to what is sensual and bad. This concupiscence manifests itself in us in early childhood, and, unless it be continually fought against and kept under control, grows strong with us as we advance in years, and dies only when the body sinks into the grave. The Apostle beautifully describes this evil concupiscence: "For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man, but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is, in my members."—*Rom. 7: 22, 23*.

4. *Tribulations, pains, and lastly death.* We may compare the earth to a cemetery, in which one tombstone stands near the other, for the sufferings and afflictions of men are as numerous as the grains of sand

on the sea-shore. There are external sufferings, the inclemency of the weather, the difficulties of labor and station in life, sickness and the racking pains of the body, accidents, misfortunes, losses; again, interior sufferings, such as sadness, fear, anguish, terror. Justly the wise man says: "Great labor is created for all men, and a heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam, from the day of their coming out of their mother's womb until the day of their burial into the mother of all."—*Eccles. 40: 1*. And after man has endured thousands of hardships and pains in this world, he must offer to sin the last and most difficult sacrifice—he *must die*, "for the wages of sin is death."—*Rom. 6: 23*.

Moreover, the earth has been cursed by God an account of Adam's sin (*Gen. 3: 17, 18*), a curse which still rests upon it, and it was on account of this sin that men came into the servitude of the devil.—*II. Tim. 2: 26; Heb. 2: 14*.

#### PERORATION.

These are the fatal consequences of original sin, which, with this sin, passed upon all men. Frequently represent to yourselves these terrible consequences, and avoid now, at least, actual sins, as you could not possibly have escaped original. Think and act as the Saints, who, through nothing in the world, could be induced to offend God by any sin. If you have the misfortune to fall into grievous sin, make an act of contrition and be reconciled with God without delay by a good confession, and walk constantly in the way of penance. Watch and pray, that you may not fall into temptation, and labor to extirpate your sinful inclinations: let no day pass without some little act of mortification and self-denial, that you may preserve the grace and filiation of God and be called to take possession of the inheritance of heaven. Amen.

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#### QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

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### 4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

#### HOW WE ARE TO KEEP THE CARNIVAL.

"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man."—*Luke 18: 31*.

The three days immediately preceding Ash Wednesday are called Shrovetide, and are the conclusion of that twelve days' season of fes-

tivity called the *Carnival*. The best definition of a word is not unfrequently found in its etymology. Now this word Carnival is derived from the two Latin words *caro*, flesh, and *velere*, to live well, and thus signifies a season in which one indulges the flesh more than usual. Careless and superficial lexicographers define it to be "a Catholic feast, or season of festivity," ignoring the fact that the Church has always been opposed to these foolish enjoyments and has endeavored to keep the faithful away from them. The great Pope Benedict XIV. says: "After the Pagan excesses which were customary on the first day of January had been abolished, another wicked custom came into vogue with regard to some enjoyments, which generally take place in the weeks of Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima. In this custom there is so much that is disgraceful and pernicious, that a certain ambassador of the Turks, making a sojourn in a Christian country, during the Shrovetide, returned to Constantinople and made his official report, 'that the Christians at a certain time of the year become insane, but get their senses back again by the mysterious virtue of a certain dust, which is strewed on their heads.'"

Let us not spend this time in the spirit of the world, but rather according to the ordinance of God. How are we to celebrate the Shrovetide?

*I. What the mass of to-day—*

*II. What certain ordinances of the Church teach us.*

#### PART I.

This Sunday's mass teaches how we should celebrate the Shrovetide. Let us consider—

1. *Its Introit.* It reads: "Be thou unto me a God, a protector, and a house of refuge to save me, for thou art my strength and my refuge, and for thy name's sake thou wilt lead me, and nourish me. In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded; deliver me in thy justice."—*Ps.* 30.

(a.) This Introit is taken from the thirtieth Psalm, which David chanted when he was hotly pursued by Saul, and was in the greatest danger of losing his life. The Church by this Introit reminds us that the present is a time of spiritual affliction and peril, and calls upon us to have recourse to God like David, that he may protect us. The world's ways are not the ways of God's Saints at any time. Wickedness is always in plenty, but especially is it abroad during those days with every manner of temptation, masquerades, balls, parties, dances, theatricals, to allure you, especially you, young men and young women, to perdition. St. Charles Borromeo says: "Behold the indissoluble

net, which the devil, our foe, throws out in these days; behold the ditches of sin, into which so many people blindly fall; behold the ruin of so many souls, which is accomplished in these days."

(b.) In the thirtieth Psalm, David appears as a type of the suffering and dying Jesus. The Church, in these days of worldly enjoyments, places before our mind's eye the Passion and death of Jesus, in order to keep us away from these sinful pleasures. What child would devote himself to pleasure and joy if his father or mother were lying on a bed of sickness, or on the death-bed? And is not Jesus more to us than father or mother? Ah! what kind of Christians would we be if, at the time when Jesus is about to suffer and die for us, we should thoughtlessly enjoy ourselves and renew the excesses of the Pagans!

2. *Its Epistle.* St. Paul speaks in it of charity, of its high meaning and necessity, then of its qualities and duration, and lastly of its superiority over all talents and virtues.

(a.) The Church has undoubtedly selected this epistle on charity for this Sunday, in order to fix our thoughts upon our divine Saviour, who, in the work of Redemption, exhibits himself as the highest and most perfect exemplar of love. "Christ hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God."—*Ephes.* 5: 2 If we reflect, during these days of the Shrovetide, on this love of Jesus, we shall disdain to participate in the vain, sinful doings of the world. This love will also urge us to pray for our fellow men, that during these days they may not offend God.

(b.) Examples: St. Magdalen of Pazzi remained almost without intermission before Jesus in the tabernacle during the Shrovetide, bewailing the offenses against God and the ruin of so many souls, and praying for the conversion of sinners. St. Catherine of Sienna watched and prayed day and night, that not many sins might be committed. St. Gertrude was accustomed on these three days, by prayer, silence, and other pious exercises, to implore God for the amendment of the people. One day she saw in heaven the divine Saviour in great glory, sitting upon a throne; before him stood St. John the Evangelist, who was writing in a large book. She asked him what he was writing. He answered that his disciple was writing down all the good works and mortifications that the Christians performed during Shrovetide, that, after their death, they may be more abundantly rewarded.

3. *Its Gospel.* It corresponds with the Introit, for it also treats of the Passion of Christ. There is no exercise more salutary for sinner and for saint than meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ.

(a.) *For the sinner.* A pious priest in Florence possessed a picture that represented Jesus crowned with thorns. He daily stood before this picture, meditating on the infinite love of Jesus towards man. On the opposite side of the street lived a vain daughter of the world, who, believing that the priest looked so often in the glass to behold himself, was scandalized and deridingly asked him to show her that wonderful mirror. The priest, in compliance with her request, brought his picture to her house. When she looked at the picture of our Redeemer with the crown of thorns on his head, his eyes full of tears, his countenance covered with spittle and blood, she was terrified and seized with emotion. But the priest said to her: "Behold, here you have the desired mirror, behold yourself in it every day. If the mirror make no impression upon you, nor move you to repentance, you shall be lost." These serious words sank so deeply into her soul that she wept bitterly over her sins, and, full of contrition, cast herself at the feet of the priest, and asked for forgiveness. She renounced the world and its vanities, and led a penitential life the rest of her days. Thus powerfully operates the contemplation of the Passion of Christ: "It wounds the hardest and inflames the iciest hearts."

(b.) *For the just.* In our suffering and dying Jesus we observe all the virtues which we should practice, such as humility, patience, meekness, obedience, the love of enemies, resignation to the will of God, and all in the most consummate perfection; wherefore St. Augustine calls the cross a pulpit, from which Jesus instructs us in all virtues, "If you, a man, wish to climb from one virtue to another, and to lead a perfect life, daily meditate on the Passion of Christ, since there is nothing that urges the soul on to holiness so powerfully as this."—*St. Bonaventure.*

Meditate, then, on the Passion and death of Christ, that you may enter with fervor upon the holy season of Lent, and derive therefrom the inestimable grace of a truly penitential spirit.

## PART II.

Of the particular ordinances which the Church has made for the Shrovetide, I shall mention only two—

1. *The exposition of the Most Holy Sacrament.* During these three days the Blessed Sacrament is exposed in many places, or the Forty Hours' Devotion takes place.

(a.) This pious custom was begun at Milan in the year 1534, and was introduced into Rome by St. Philip Neri in 1548, and was sanctioned by Pope Clement VIII., who, November 26th, 1592, issued a solemn

Bull concerning it. The devotion owes its origin to Father Joseph, a Capuchin friar at Milan.

They decorated churches and altars, exposed the Blessed Sacrament, held processions, preached sermons, and held public devotions. This means was not without fruit. Many ceased going to the pleasures and entertainments of the season, and participated instead in the public devotions. In these they found greater and sweeter joys than in the frivolous enjoyments of the world. Popes Benedict XIV. and Clement XIII. emphatically recommended this beautiful devotion to the faithful, and enriched it with many indulgences. The latter Pope, in particular, granted a plenary indulgence to all who devoutly visit the Blessed Sacrament and worthily receive the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist.

(b.) This should be an encouragement for you to visit Jesus in his Sacrament of love, to adore him, and make what little reparation is in your power for the outrages heaped on him during these days. Do not follow the world, which invites to its sinful pleasures and enjoyments, but follow your divine Saviour, who affectionately and earnestly invites you, saying: "Come to me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you."—*Matt. 11: 28*. I solemnly assure you that you shall derive more genuine joy and lasting felicity in one hour spent in true devotion before your divine Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament than is derived by worldlings who spend whole days and nights in such fleeting, sensual pleasures. The truth of David's words shall be verified in you, and you will exclaim with the Royal Prophet: "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! far better is one day in thy courts above thousands (thousand days in the joys and pleasures of the world)."—*Psalms 83: 1-11*.

## 2. The reception of Penance and the Blessed Sacrament.

(a.) The Church earnestly desires that the faithful during these days should go to confession and communion. For this reason she admonishes pastors of souls to hear confessions. She also grants a plenary indulgence to all who sincerely and penitently confess their sins.

(b.) The reason why the Church so anxiously wishes you to confess and communicate during these days, is twofold—

(1.) That you may stay away from these dangerous and frequently sinful enjoyments. If our young people would confess and communicate at this season, there would be no apprehension that they would suffer any spiritual loss; they would find no pleasure in the foolish doings of men, nor be tempted to participate in them.

(2.) That you should prepare yourselves for Lent as well as possible. The worthy reception of the Sacraments is the best possible preparation, for the more you purify your conscience from all stains of sin, the more pleasingly will God receive your penitential works in Lent, and the greater graces will he give you. It may also be expected that you shall employ the holy season of Lent, too, better, if you sanctify the days immediately preceding it by the reception of the Sacraments and other pious exercises, than if you desecrate them by various excesses and frivolities. Christians that spend Shrovetide in wickedness, will generally continue their worldly and sinful life during Lent, and will think but little of penance and amendment.

## PERORATION.

I have now explained to you how you are to spend the Shrovetide according to the will of the Church. May God grant you that you may spend these days, not with the children of the world in dissipation and frivolity, but in holy exercises of devotion and in retirement with the good and the pious. Consider that you belong to Jesus, and must not, therefore, renew the follies and vices of the ancient Pagans. Consider also that these days are the proximate preparation for Lent, and dedicate them accordingly by meditating on the Sacred Passion and death of our Lord. By frequently visiting and adoring him, in the Blessed Eucharist, and by the worthy reception of the holy Sacraments, you shall prepare for him a pleasing dwelling in your hearts. Amen.

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 QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY
 

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## 5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

WE GO UP TO JERUSALEM.

*"We go up to Jerusalem."*—Luke 18: 31.

## PART I.

Jesus says: "*We go.*" We must also say the same to one another, whether we consider our *temporal* or *spiritual* life

1 *Our temporal life.*

(a.) If we look at the clock, we scarce notice the fingers move; and



yet they move, move continually, till it is run down, and must then be wound up again. So is it with our life; it is continually going, and every minute brings us nearer to eternity, each step brings us nearer the grave. "We have no lasting city here, but seek one to come."—*Heb.* 13: 14. Our life is only a lingering death; months and years pass by, and we scarcely notice them. We often hear people say: How quickly the time flies! Ah! what is our life? "It is a vapor which appeareth for a little while, and afterwards shall vanish away."—*St. James* 4: 15. "My days have been swifter than a post: they have passed by as ships carrying fruits, as an eagle flying to the prey."—*Job* 9: 25, 26. As our life, so everything that it offers us, is vain and fleeting. The brother of that great servant of God, Thomas à Kempis, was proud of a new house he had built for himself; but a friend of his told him that the house had one great defect. "What defect?" he asked. "The defect is that you made a door in it." "How can the door be a defect?" "Oh," said his friend, "the day will come when you shall be carried out of it a corpse, and must leave house and all."

So it is. Everything that this life gives, riches, pleasures, honors, dignities, all shall disappear with it, all ends with death, and "only the grave remaineth for man."—*Job* 17: 1. Many things even do not last until death, but vanish after a few years, weeks, days, or hours. This is particularly true of joys and pleasures; they last but a few hours, and leave behind them nothing but the indistinct remembrance, perhaps a bitter remembrance of having offended God.

(b.) *Our spiritual life.*

Even here there is no stand-still. There is no such thing as standing still in the spiritual life. Change is the eternal law of nature; there is a continual going, either *backward* or *forward*. St. Augustine says: "If we begin to stand still in the way of holiness, we go backward; and there, where we make no more progress in virtue, we quickly become worse." We can not remain in one or the other state in such a way that we neither increase or decrease in that which is good; he that becomes no better, becomes worse. He who is tepid and not solicitous for the salvation of his soul, without noticing it, goes backward. In the beginning he commits perhaps only venial sins, but, by-and-by, he falls into mortal sins. It is, therefore, not only a good counsel, but a stern duty, to endeavor seriously to make progress in virtue, because the salvation of our soul depends on it.

(c.) You must, therefore, guard yourselves against retrograding in the spiritual life. Some are badly off enough already, with a conscience loaded down with mortal sins. How deplorable would be your lot if in these days you should again offend God! How deplorable

should such persons, on the very threshold of the holy season of Lent, the season of sorrow for sin, of forgiveness and God's mercy, turn their backs deliberately on God, saying, in acts if not in words, that they care nothing for the divine mercy, that they are not and will not be sorry for their sins! Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation, and be on your guard, that, in these dangerous days, you sin not and so fall away unto eternal perdition.

## PART II.

*Up to.* Jesus went up to Jerusalem, which lies considerably higher than Jericho, whence he started; therefore his way was upwards.

1. Our way is also upwards. We are obliged to ascend rugged Mount Sinai, which lies eight thousand feet above the level of the sea, if we wish to obtain our last end. On Mount Sinai the ten commandments were given to the children of Israel. We ascend this mountain when we keep the commandments of God. We are bound, much more than the Israelites, to observe these commandments, for we must keep them not only according to the letter, but also according to the spirit. So our divine Saviour teaches, saying: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."—*Matt.* 19: 16–19. All the Saints entered into heaven because they kept the commandments, and all the damned were cast into hell because they went the broad, easy way, and transgressed the commandments. Examine yourselves seriously to-day, and see whether you go up or not, whether you keep God's commandments or not, that you may find out whether you be on the road to heaven or to hell.

2. Many, perhaps, quiet themselves with the thought that this is Shrovetide; that now is not the time to be climbing Mount Sinai. God, say they to themselves, will not be so exact with his commandments. This is a wrong conclusion to arrive at. God's commandments are always binding, at Shrovetide as well as on Good Friday, and there is not a moment in life in which we are allowed to transgress or disregard them. A hundred years ago there was a Shrovetide, as well as now. Many may have said to themselves then, it is Shrovetide, let us have a good time of it. And they did, probably, have a good time of it; they enjoyed all the pleasures within their reach, and thereby committed sin. But how was it when they came to die? Did God take no note of these sins? Indeed he did, and called them to a rigorous account, and unless they did penance for them he cast them away forever. And the wretched beings, how they now curse those sins and that good time which caused their damnation! Therefore, *upwards* take your way; keep God's commandments now as well as at any other time.

## PART III.

*To Jerusalem.*

There are two Jerusalems, an *ancient and earthly*, and a *new and heavenly* Jerusalem. That we may go with Jesus to the latter, we must go up with him to the former.

1. *The ancient and earthly Jerusalem.* This was the last time that Jesus went up to this Jerusalem, for the time had come when he should accomplish the work of our Redemption by his Passion and death on the cross: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man. For he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon; and after they have scourged him, they will put him to death."

If we desire to be true disciples of Jesus, we must accompany him on his journey to Jerusalem; for he emphatically says: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."—*Matt.* 16: 24. Therefore St. Paul writes: "They who are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences."—*Gal.* 5: 24.

What Jesus and his Apostle say, holds good for Shrovetide as well as for all times; the world calls this time the Carnival, a horrible name, which means nothing else than to serve the flesh, as the Pagans formerly did, who, masquerading themselves and bearing torches in their hands, bawling and screaming through the streets and public thoroughfares, made night hideous with their frantic Bacchanalian orgies, and who yielded without restraint to dissipation and debaucheries of every sort. Where is the Christian who would not feel ashamed to spend Shrovetide in such a manner—a Christian who would not reflect on the word of St. Peter Chrysologus: "They who will jest with the devil on earth, can never rejoice with Christ in heaven." Let us therefore go up to Jerusalem with Jesus, and show to the world that we are Christians who no longer serve sin (*Rom.* 6: 6), but "live soberly, and justly, and piously in this world."—*Tit.* 2: 12.

2. *The new and heavenly Jerusalem.*

(a.) He who now goes up to the earthly Jerusalem with Jesus, and crucifies his flesh, with its vices and concupiscences, may hope that he shall go up with him to the new and spiritual Jerusalem. St. John, speaking of this Jerusalem, says: "I, John, saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride

adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice from the throne, saying: Behold the tabernacle of God with men; and he will dwell with them. And they shall be his people; and God himself with them shall be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more; for the former things are passed away."—*Apocalypse* 21: 2-4. Oh, how glorious, how beautiful, how blessed will this new Jerusalem be! When King Theodoric of Italy entered Rome, surrounded by a thousand brilliant courtiers, and the city displayed a splendor never seen before, St. Fulgentius exclaimed to his companions: "Oh, how delightful must not the heavenly Jerusalem be, when this earthly Rome is so beautiful! With what glory will not Jesus Christ adorn his confessors and saints in heaven, if here upon earth he permits such a glory to the servants of contemptuous vanity."

(b.) To this new, spiritual Jerusalem turn your thoughts. If the world invite you to its enjoyments, and use all exertions to represent its joys and pleasures to you in the most alluring manner,—when you see everything around you full of pleasures and joy, think of the heavenly Jerusalem, and say with St. Ignatius: "Oh how disdainful is this earth to me, when I contemplate heaven." Truly, the contemplation of the happiness of heaven will make you stay away from these enjoyments, either entirely, or enjoy them only so far as they can be enjoyed without offending God.

## PERORATION.

Raise your eyes to heaven, for, not for the earth, but for heaven were you created. Climb up to Mount Sinai, and keep the commandments of God at all times. Go with Jesus up to Jerusalem, meditate on his Passion and death, and lead a retired, penitential life, for only by doing so may you hope to obtain admission into the heavenly Jerusalem. Amen

## QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

## 6. MORAL SKETCH.

THE SAD CONDITION OF THE SINNER; HOW HE CAN AMEND IT.

*"Son of David, have mercy on me."—Luke 13: 39.*

Of all temporal evils, blindness may be said to be the greatest. Even the pious Tobias felt his blindness so burdensome that he said to Raphael the Archangel: "What manner of joy shall be to me, who sit in darkness, and see not the light of heaven."—*Tob. 5: 12.* And he asked of God the favor of letting him die: "O Lord, do with me according to thy will, and command my spirit to be received in peace, for it is better for me to die than to live."—*Tob. 3: 6.* We need not wonder, then, that the blind man mentioned in the gospel of this day cried out so loudly and perseveringly to Jesus: "Son of David, have mercy on me." But by far a greater evil than blindness is sin, for this evil, unless it be expiated by true repentance, has eternal perdition as its consequence, whilst blindness renders man wretched and miserable only for the short space of this life. Let us to-day turn our eyes upon the blind man, in whom the sinner is depicted, and consider—

*I. In what a sad condition the sinner is, and**II. How he can amend it.*

## PART I.

To understand the wretched condition of a sinner, we need only apply to him what is said of the blind man in the gospel: "*A blind man sat by the wayside, begging.*"

1. *A blind man.* This blind man had no eyes at all perhaps, he may have lost them by some accident or sickness, or he may have had eyes, but they were so injured as to deprive him of sight; from whatever cause his blindness originated, his condition was sad and miserable, because he could not see.

Sinners resemble the blind man.

(a.) Many sinners are entirely destitute of the spiritual eye, which is *faith*. To this class belong the Gentiles, of whom there are about eight hundred millions. How deplorable is their condition! They have no knowledge of God, and are idolaters; the greatest sins and vices, such as human sacrifices, bloody revenge, suicide, debauchery,

many of them look upon, not only as licit, but even as pleasing to their deities. St. Paul describes their unfortunate condition.—*Rom. 1: 23*. What thanks do we not owe God for having called us to the light of the true faith! How solicitous we ought to be to aid the blind Pagans in coming to the knowledge of the true God, by prayer and contributing our mite to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith!

(b.) There are others, whose eyes are covered with a film or otherwise injured; and they are the infidels and Free-thinkers of our days, who, by associating with impious men, or by the reading of bad books and newspapers, or in consequence of their dissipations and debaucheries, have lost the faith. They are so blind that they call "virtue vice, and vice virtue—darkness light, and light darkness—bitter sweet, and sweet bitter."—*Is. 5: 20*. They have caused their blindness themselves, and are therefore culpable before God. See to it that you do not lose the faith, and to prevent any such woful calamity befalling you, keep no company with the enemies of the Church, and do not read bad books and irreligious newspapers.

2. *He sat.* Why did the blind man sit? had he no feet? Yes, he had feet, but in order to walk and move around, one needs not only two feet, but also the light of the eye. As he was destitute of this, he was obliged to sit in the place whither he had been conducted.

The sinner also sits. He might go, but he dares not, because he is deprived of sight: he dreads the difficulties connected with a thorough conversion and a penitential life, and for this reason he can not resolve to rise from sin and walk the narrow road of virtue. Examples from life. Tell the *avaricious* that all the goods of this world are vain and perishable, that their acquisition and possession carry with them much pain and disquietude, that Christ exclaims "woe to the rich," and declares "that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into heaven," (*Matt. 19: 23*); your avaricious man will hear all in cold blood, but not change his mind one iota. Say to the *drunkard*, that by his drunkenness he degrades himself below the beast, that he brings poverty, shame, and wretchedness on himself in this world, and hereafter must share the lot of Dives if he will not amend his life. 'Tis only waste of time. He will return to his glass as though you had not uttered a word. Tell the *impure man*, that by his base passion he renders himself despicable before the whole world, and that he rushes headlong into perdition; you will preach to deaf ears. Tell the *unjust man*, that unless he make restitution and restore what is ill-gotten, he can never be saved; he will pay no heed. Thus the sinner sits, like the blind man, and remains sitting. He is too cowardly a slave to his passions, and there-

fore can not resolve to rise and enter on the way of penance. Do you not resemble the blind man, who "sat"?

4. *By the wayside.* The way, where the blind man sat, was a public thoroughfare, on which many people traveled; it led to Jericho, a city which, cursed by God, was destroyed by the Israelites (*Jos. 6: 21*); that road was rendered dangerous and insecure by robbers, and, as the Gospel informs us, a man who once was going to Jericho fell among them, whereupon they stripped him, and having wounded him, went away, leaving him half-dead.—*Luke 10: 30.*

Such is the road on which the sinner travels. It is not the narrow way that leads to life, and which only a few find, but the broad way that leads to destruction, and by which many enter.—*Matt. 7: 13, 14.*

Many a sinner quiets himself with the thought: The majority of people live as I do; it is a universal custom; what I do, therefore, can not be so very wrong; if God should condemn me, no man should be saved. What insane language! What is sin is sin, and remains sin, whether one or a thousand do it. God is just, and condemns millions of impenitent sinners, with the same rigorous justice, to eternal fire, as he would one. Example: the deluge. Every one who commits a mortal sin, becomes guilty of eternal damnation; repentance, a true and speedy repentance, is the only means of deliverance. "Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish."—*Luke 13: 3.* He who merely confesses his sins, but without sincere contrition and a firm purpose of amendment, is not truly penitent, and shall not escape eternal damnation. He who repents not in time, but delays his conversion from one time to another, is in imminent danger of being cast away, according to the word of the Lord. "Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day; for his wrath will come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee."—*Eccles. 5: 8, 9.* Every one who has once entered upon the ways of sin, stands in danger of damnation, for he comes into the power of Satan, who will spare no pains to destroy his soul. The holy Fathers and spiritual writers do not hesitate to say that the number of those who have never lost their baptismal innocence and are saved, exceeds the number of those who are saved by means of penance. Therefore, guard against committing a mortal sin. You may never be able to recover sanctifying grace by means of penance.

4. *Begging.* Why did the blind man beg? Because he was poor, and, in consequence of his blindness, was not able to earn his bread by work.

The sinner is in such a situation. He is poor, wretchedly poor, though his broad acres be numberless and he be a millionaire. because

he is destitute of the supernatural goods, which alone have any value before God. He is deprived of *sanctifying grace*, that precious pearl which Jesus has purchased and merited by the price of his precious blood; he lacks all merit for heaven, for any merits that he had he lost the moment he fell into grievous sin, as the Lord says: "If the just man turn himself away from his justice and do iniquity . . . all his justice which he had done shall not be remembered."—*Ezech.* 18: 24. He is deprived of the filiation of God and the right of heaven, for by sin he forfeited the friendship of God, and barred heaven against himself by his own hand. Add to this, that as long as he remain in the state of sin, all the good works he does are without the least merit for heaven; for he is separated from Christ, the vine, and therefore can bring forth no fruit.—*John* 15: 6. To him, the words of the epistle of this day apply: "If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."—*I. Cor.* 13: 3.

Oh, how wretched is the condition of the sinner, how much more wretched than that of the blind man, who sat by the wayside begging!

## PART II.

What must the sinner do, in order to put an end to his wretched situation? He must do what the blind man in the gospel did.

1. *He believed.* When he heard the multitude passing by, he asked what it meant, and being told that "Jesus of Nazareth was passing by," he cried out, saying: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." Hereby he showed that he believed that Jesus could help him. And Jesus himself testifies that his faith had made him whole.

Faith is the beginning of salvation, the root and ground of justification. Without faith it is impossible to please God, without faith we can not be admitted into the number and society of his children.—(Council of Trent, sess 6, cap. 8) If, therefore, the sinner is to be justified, he must believe all that God has revealed and proposes by his Church to our belief, he must especially believe that God will be gracious and merciful to him for Jesus' sake. A sinner who lacks this faith, hopes not in God, inclines not to love him, repents not of his sins, has no purpose of amendment—at least, not from supernatural motives, and can not, therefore, obtain the forgiveness of his sins. Matters stand very ill with a sinner who has gone so far as to lose the faith; he carries on his forehead the brand of damnation. May the Lord protect us from such unbelief!

2. He had recourse to *prayer*, and cried out repeatedly with a loud voice: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." On this petition



and crying-out depended his healing. If he had been silent, there is no doubt that Jesus would have passed him by without helping him.

Thus the first requisite for the sinner, in order to be reconciled with God, besides faith, is to *pray*. As long as he turn not to God, as long as he pray not, it is evident that he is yet blind and obstinate, and that he has not the wish to be converted. How could a sinner of that kind obtain forgiveness? Moreover, conversion is a grace, and indeed one of the greatest, which God does not grant without prayer. Hence we see that all those who were truly converted, prayed. Witness David, the penitent thief on the cross, St. Paul. As long as the sinner do not pray in the spirit of repentance, and pray with fervor and devotion, there is no hope for his conversion.

3. The blind man showed himself persistent and persevering. Those that went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace, but he cried out much more: "Son of David, have mercy on me." Suppose that he had been intimidated and held his peace, what then? Very probably he should not have been healed of his blindness.

If the sinner wish to effect his conversion, he must manfully surmount all obstacles. The world, the flesh, and the devil exert themselves indefatigably to make him waver in his resolution of amendment; they tell him that he shall be ridiculed, mocked, abused, and jeered at; they assure him that God is infinitely merciful, that he does not take things so strictly as the priests say; they try to persuade him to enjoy himself like others of his age and condition in life, and suggest that there is time enough yet for penance. It frequently happens that the sinner, after having made a resolution of amendment, is violently tempted to fear, despondency, and false shame, that his associates in sin ridicule him, and endeavor to argue or laugh him out of his purpose. But all these things must not deter the sinner from the execution of his design. How much a man will do in order to gain some little temporal advantage or avert a temporal loss from himself! What does he not endure? What sacrifices does he not make? And should the sinner show himself weak and cowardly when there is question of the salvation of his immortal soul?

4. *He commanded him to be brought to him.* Jesus, moved to compassion by the poor man's repeated crying-out, stood, and commanded him to be brought to him, and then healed him of his blindness. It was necessary to bring him to Jesus, for if he had not been brought to him, he should not have been made to see. As the blind man, so the sinner must be brought to Jesus, that he may find grace. Jesus himself requires this, saying, "Come to me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you."—*Matt. 11: 28*. But who are they who bring us to Jesus? They are—

(a.) *Conscience.* That interior voice of God, which urges and impels the sinner to quit his sinful life, and by repentance to save his soul.

(b.) *The words of the priest and other well-meaning Christians.* The priest exhorts, entreats, persuades, threatens, tells of God's justice, speaks of his mercy, holds up the joys of heaven as a reward, points to the abyss of hell as a punishment, that the sinner may break his fetters and be converted. How often do parents and good friends advise him to make his peace with God!

(c.) *Joyful or sad events in his life.* God prospers and blesses his undertakings, gives him good health and old age, or he visits him with various crosses and afflictions, in order to draw him to himself by benefits and chastisements. Happy the sinner who is brought to Jesus—he is saved; but woe to him who stubbornly resists, and remains sitting by the wayside of sin—he must perish. Ask yourselves how you have acted heretofore, and if you have allowed yourselves to be brought to Jesus.

#### PERORATION.

Take the blind man for a pattern, and do as he did, in order to find with Jesus grace and the forgiveness of sin. Make an act of faith, pray with fervor and confidence; for faith and confidence are the first and most necessary requisites for the obtaining of every grace, and therefore also for reconciliation with God. Be not deterred by any obstacle from the work of penance, trust in God, and full of confidence, say with the Apostle: "I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me."—*Phil.* 4: 13. Be governed by the goodness of God, who in various ways endeavors to purify and sanctify you, and if you have found grace and salvation with Jesus, glorify him and follow him, be faithful to the end, "and hold fast the confession of your hope without wavering."—*Heb* 10: 23. Amen.

## QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

## 7. MORAL SKETCH.

## WHAT WE MUST AVOID IN THE SHROVETIDE.

*"See, therefore, brethren, how you walk circumspectly; not as unwise, but as wise, redeeming the time; for the days are evil."—Ephes. 5: 15, 16.*

The Church reads for us to-day the gospel in which Jesus speaks of his Passion and death, that by the contemplation of this mystery of divine love we may be protected from the excesses to which many Christians yield themselves in Shrovetide. She also sets before our eyes a blind man, to indicate that Christians who participate in these sinful entertainments are struck with spiritual blindness, since they do not know the baseness and perniciousness of these enjoyments. Oh, that all would consider the words of the Apostle in these days of levity and extravagance: "See, therefore, brethren, how you walk circumspectly; not as unwise, but as wise, redeeming the time; for the days are evil." That you may conduct yourselves during these days as becomes Christians, I shall show—

- I. What you must omit, and*
- II. What you must do.*

## PART I.

What you are obliged to avoid in these days needs no long explanation. They are the entertainments and enjoyments which are in vogue in cities and villages, such as balls, dinners, suppers, bacchanals, masquerades, in which God is much and grievously offended. It is evident that you must keep away from them, for—

1. *They are of Pagan origin.* As all writers agree, they are nothing but a continuation of the bacchanals, that is, of the feasts dedicated to the god of drunkenness and impurity, which had their origin with the Egyptians, and from them were brought to the Greeks and Romans, and lastly were introduced and spread in Christian countries. Now, as all Paganism comes from the devil, that spirit of untruth, so it may be said especially of the enjoyments and dissipations of the Shrovetide. So say the Fathers of the Church. "The Shrovetide," says St John Chrysostom, "was not invented by those who are called for heaven, and whose names are already registered in the heavenly country, neither is it an invention of man, but of the devil, who intro-

duced it for the purpose of drawing the soldiers of Jesus Christ after him and of weakening them." St. Augustine calls these Shrovetide pleasures the sacraments of the devil, because they have effects directly opposite to those of the Sacraments. Who would not detest these enjoyments, which have the devil for their author?

2. *They are very unbecoming to Christians.* St. Paul exhorts us: "Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy, but put you on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences."—*Rom. 13: 11-14.* Do not Christians who participate in these enjoyments do quite the reverse of what the Apostle commands? Do they not sin by intemperance in eating and drinking, by impurity, contention, quarreling, and even murder? Do they not add fuel to the concupiscence of the flesh? And is it decorous for a Christian, who pretends to be an image of Christ, to act as insanely, extravagantly, and shamefully as a Pagan? Judge for yourselves.

3. *They are very dangerous and injurious, especially for youth.* St. Charles Borromeo says: "They are the indissoluble nets which the devil, our adversary, throws out in these days; they are the ditches of sin, into which so many men fall blindly; behold the ruin of the many souls which is accomplished through them." Surely, Satan triumphs in these days; how much he domineers and tyrannizes over the people of God! And this is the case not only with the common crowd, but even with such as at other times are earnest and sedate. In these days people will drink to excess, and drunkenness is the path that leads to all vices; they will dance, and of dancing St. Ephraim says: "Where there is music and dance and clapping of hands, there is the obscenity of men, the ruin of women, the sadness of the angels, and the festival of the devil." What renders these enjoyments particularly dangerous and pernicious is that they are kept on till far into the night, under cover of which all debaucheries, dissipations, and vices can be practiced the more unhindered.

4. *They prepare great punishments for those who can not control themselves.* Job (21: 12, 13) says: "They take the timbrel and the harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ; they spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell." Hell is threatened as a punishment to those who in these days give full scope to their passions. A few years ago, in a certain city of Germany, they buried the Shrovetide, as it was customary in some places, in a miserable farce. Of all the *dramatis personæ*, no one sustained his character so well as the man who impersonated the dying Shrovetide. He imitated the actions and gestures of a dying person so well, and in such a perfectly natural way,

that the spectators were arrested in the midst of their revelry and held spellbound. But the frivolous jest took a sad end, for, to the great terror of all, it suddenly transpired that he who had played his part so well was really dead! Where is his soul now? And where are the souls of so many Christians who, twenty, thirty, forty or more years ago, participated in these enjoyments, and with the sins they then committed passed to eternity? And what have you to expect, who will participate in these enjoyments this year, and load down your conscience with mortal sins? May these enjoyments not be the cause of your eternal damnation! Consider this well, and beware of doing anything which might make your dying hour hard, or cause your eternal perdition.

## PART II.

What are you to do in these days? You must,—

### 1. *Watch*, and, above all,

(a.) *Over yourselves.* Seeing that the children of the world enjoy the proffered pleasures to their heart's content, some of you might be tempted also to participate in them; then you should be in danger of offending God by grievous sins. It may be that others will persuade you not to make an exception of yourself in these days, but to take your share in the fun and frolic, to enjoy what is a-going like everybody else. You must then be on your guard, not to be led astray, neither by the inordinate motions and inclinations of your own heart, nor by frivolous companions. This watchfulness is all the more necessary in case, owing to circumstances, you can not be absent from such amusements or decline all participation therein. You must watch over yourselves with redoubled care, that you may do or say nothing which you should afterward regret.

(b.) *Over others.* Parents must watch over their children, that they may not suffer loss of their virtue and innocence. But Christian charity obliges all, without exception, to work by word and example upon their fellow-men, to persuade them to abstain from amusements by which God is offended. St. Chrysostom says: "If ever we have a feeling of brotherly love, and take any interest in the salvation of others, we must keep back those who, in these days, rush into perdition and fall victims to death and go to hell."

2. *Pray for yourselves*, that in this time of levity you may not offend God, and pray for *others*, especially those who participate in these enjoyments, that they may not fall into sin. This intercessory prayer is—

(a.) *Pleasing to God*, because thereby we manifest our zeal for his

honor and our love of our neighbor. "Let us pray for one another," says St Chrysostom. To pray for one's self is, as it were, an impulse of nature, but to pray for others is a work of grace. Our misery compels us to pray for ourselves, but to pray for others is a work of the purest love. St. Stephen, whilst being stoned to death, prayed for the youthful Saul, and this prayer was so acceptable to God that by it the conversion of Saul was effected. Hence St. Augustine says: "If St. Stephen had not prayed; the Church would not have St. Paul." Stephen was heard by God, and by his prayer the sins of Saul were blotted out. If, therefore, in these days we pray for others, especially young people, we may do much good, and perhaps save many a soul from perdition.

(b.) *Very useful to us.* St. Catherine of Sienna, during the Shrovetide, received of God one of the greatest graces. She had retired to her cell and given herself to most fervent prayer. Jesus, with his Mother and holy angels, appeared to her, and said: "Because thou hast contemned the vanities of the world, and hast chosen the cross and penance by seeking in these days the highest and only good, I will espouse myself to thee,"—and in these words he made her his bride. Thus the Shrovetide, which is for the frivolous a time of many and great sins, is for Christians who retire and devote themselves to exercises of devotion, a time of great and many graces.

(c.) *The wish of the Church.* Over three hundred years has the Forty Hours' Devotion been introduced into the Church on the three days preceding Ash Wednesday. The object of this devotion is no other than that, by the prayer of the faithful, the many sins which are usually committed in Shrovetide may be prevented, and that sinners obtain mercy. To promote this beautiful devotion, Pope Clement XIII., in the year 1765, granted a plenary indulgence to all those who, after a worthy reception of the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist, visit and adore the exposed Blessed Sacrament. The wish of the Church, and the indulgence which she grants us, should urge us to visit the church frequently during these days, and assist at the public devotions.

3. *Do other good things, especially the works of mercy.* So the consort of Louis XII. of France, in thanksgiving for her restored health, had fifteen thousand ducats distributed among the poor during the Shrovetide. If you give the money which others spend for these enjoyments, in alms to the poor and needy, it will certainly please God very much, and bring you a reward both for time and eternity. In former days it was customary for pious Christians to retire for these

three days, and to make a spiritual retreat, in order to prepare themselves worthily for the approaching season of Lent.

I will relate to you a remarkable conversion that was once brought about by such a retreat, and by which a notorious worldling saved his soul.

In the monastery of the Oratorians at Avignon, in France, there lived the Superior Allard, a very holy man. He wrote a few lines to his friend, Saze by name, informing him that he was coming to spend the Shrovetide with him. He gave the letter to the porter to deliver it to the man, but the porter, instead of *Saze* read it *Suze*, who was a worldling and led a very dissipated life, and accordingly sent the letter to him. Suze was in his villa, surrounded by many people who intended to spend the Shrovetide with him, when the letter was handed to him. He read it, looked at the signature, and was amazed. He could not comprehend why Allard, such a distinguished and holy man, wished to spend the Shrovetide with him. His friends laughed at his perplexity, but he became only the more serious and sad. Seeing that he could not be gotten out of his serious mood, they left him, thinking that his notion, as they termed it, would work itself off during the night. But poor Suze could not sleep that night, the voice of his conscience became louder, and he recognized the finger of God. Rising from his bed, he threw himself on his knees, and bitterly bewailed his sins.

In the morning he was an entirely changed man. He sat down and wrote to Father Allard, and thinking that he intended to come for the rescue of his soul, thanked him for the letter and requested him not to come, as he was not worthy of his visit; but promised that he himself would go to visit him at the end of the Lenten season in order to make to him a general confession. Suze then lived penitently and retired, not only during the three days, but also throughout Lent. A pious religious who had heard of his conversion visited him, and persuaded him not to put off his confession to the end of Lent. Suze at first remonstrated a little, saying that he wished to confess to Father Allard, but by the repeated entreaties of the religious he was induced to make his confession to him the following day. After he had made his confession with the most profound contrition, the religious was about taking his departue; but he had scarcely reached the main entrance of the castle, when he was called back and told that Suze was dying. He returned to the dying man, who had been struck by apoplexy, and had just time to give him the last consolations of our holy religion, when the pious penitent breathed his last, died the death of the just in the arms of the priest, and left one more of those admirable examples of the infinite mercy of God.

## PERORATION.

Shrovetide was to this man a time of grace and salvation. It will be the same to you, if you omit what you should omit and do what you should do. Keep away from all those places of sinful enjoyments, rejoice in the Lord, watch and pray, go to confession and communion, and redeem your sins by alms and works of mercy to the poor. Amen.

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## FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

EPISTLE. *II. Cor. 6. 1-10.* Brethren: We do exhort you, that you receive not the grace of God in vain. For he saith: "In an accepted time have I heard thee; and in the day of salvation have I helped thee." Behold, now is the acceptable time: behold, now is the day of salvation. Giving no offense to any man, that our ministry be not blamed: but in all things let us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in tribulation, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in prisons, in seditions, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, in chastity, in knowledge, in long suffering, in sweetness, in the Holy Ghost, in charity unfeigned, in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the armor of justice on the right hand and on the left: through honor and dishonor: through infamy and good name: as seducers, and yet speaking truth: as unknown, and yet known: as dying, and behold we live: as chastised, and not killed: as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing: as needy, yet enriching many: as having nothing and possessing all things.

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## 1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

THE APOSTLE GIVES US SALUTARY ADMONITIONS, AND ENCOURAGES US TO FOLLOW HIM.

We are to sanctify the forty days' fast which we began on Ash Wednesday, by exercises of devotion, of interior and exterior mortification, and of Christian love and mercy, that we may prepare ourselves worthily for the coming feast of Easter and become partakers of the fruits of the Redemption. The Church also exhorts us to it in the epistle of this Sunday, and calls upon us not to allow the holy season of Lent, that precious time of grace, to pass unprofitably by us. Let us then briefly consider the contents of this epistle. The Apostle gives us in it—

- I. Salutary admonitions; and encourages us*
- II. To imitate him.*



## PART I.

St. Paul, in the epistle for this day, gives us a twofold admonition—

1. *Not to receive the grace of God in vain, and*
2. *To profit by the acceptable time to secure our salvation*

(*ad. 1.*) By grace we understand here *the grace of faith, and the purification and sanctification united with this grace*. We have received this grace in baptism. Before baptism we did not belong to Christianity, we were heathens. Hence when the priest asked us in baptism, What dost thou ask of the Church of God? we responded by the mouth of our sponsors, Faith. When we received the Sacrament of Baptism, faith, together with hope and charity, was infused into our souls; at the same time we were cleansed, sanctified, made children of God and heirs of heaven. How great this grace is! Ah! millions and millions of men are born, live, and die without the happiness of being baptized, while we, a few hours after our birth, were baptized without our coöperation, and without any merit of ours. Oh! how grateful to God ought we to be for this grace, how faithfully should we preserve it! Example: The holy martyrs, who, for their faith, sacrificed their lives.

(*a.*) *The other graces which, through the merits of Jesus Christ, we receive for our salvation*. I mention here the graces which flow to us from the Sacraments, the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and the public service of God, also the special graces which we receive befitting our state of life. It were easier for us to count the beatings of our pulse or to number the respirations of a lifetime, than to enumerate the graces which we continually receive from God. On the last day, when every secret shall be revealed, all the graces which God has given us will pass before our eyes, and full of amazement, we shall exclaim: "Oh, how good was God towards me; what did he not do to rescue and to save me!"

(*b.*) According to the admonition of the Apostle, we should not receive these graces *in vain*. What does this mean? It means, we should highly esteem the graces of God, take care of them, and employ them for the end for which they are given. Ah! how great is the number of Christians who receive grace in vain! To this class belong those who forfeit the grace of baptism—perhaps already in early youth—who, after every confession, relapse into their former sins who neglect the reception of the Sacraments, the hearing of the word of God, the opportunities and means of salvation, who disregard the voice of their conscience and salutary lessons and admonitions. Let each of us ask

himself: Am I one of the many who receive grace in vain? Woe to him who receives grace in vain! his hopes of heaven are vain, his perdition certain.

(ad. 2.) "*Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*" This acceptable time, or this day of salvation, is—

(a.) With regard to the Gospel, the *whole space of time from the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ till the end of the world.*

How fortunate are we that we were not born before this time, nor in the time of the Old Law. How weak and little were the graces and means of salvation of those who lived then compared with ours. Their sacrifices consisted in animals, flour, incense; our sacrifice is Jesus Christ, the God-man; their sacraments were empty signs without grace; our Sacraments are expiating and sanctifying; their entire divine worship was only a shadow and a type; ours is life and truth. How repugnant was it not in the Old Law, even for the just to die; for they departed from this world with the consciousness that they were obliged to languish for hundreds and thousands of years in Limbo before they could be admitted to the vision and fruition of God. How confidently can we die in the New Law, if we only live piously, since heaven is opened to us, into which we can enter immediately after death, or after our purification in purgatory.

(b.) With regard to every individual person, *our lifetime upon earth is that acceptable time.* As long as man lives he may work out his salvation, for God gives the necessary grace for it; but how long our lifetime will last we do not know; as a rule, it runs down sooner than we expect. "Man knoweth not his own end, but as fishes are taken with the hook, and as birds are caught with a snare, so men are taken in the evil time, when it shall suddenly come upon them."—*Eccles. 9: 12.*

As we know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man shall come, we must "work whilst it is day, for the night cometh, when no man can work."—*John 9: 4.* As this night may come upon us at any moment, we must always be solicitous for our salvation. Ah! how much would the damned in hell give for an hour or a minute in order to make their peace with God! And we, who have not hours and minutes for our salvation, but a long series of years, shall we let this acceptable time pass away unprofitably?

(c.) With regard to the Ecclesiastical year in particular, *the present holy season of Lent*, to which the Church also applies it. During Lent we celebrate the most important mysteries of our holy religion, we call to mind the forty days' fast of Jesus in the desert, of his combat with

Satan, whom he overcomes three times, and especially of his Passion and death, by which he accomplishes the work of our Redemption. Should we not avail ourselves of this holy time for entering into ourselves, for pious exercises of penance, and in general for the salvation of our souls? What kind of Christians would we be, if we should spend heedlessly or desecrate by sin and vice that holy time in which Jesus is represented to us as suffering and dying?

## PART II.

The Apostle urges us to follow him. Like him, we must—

1. *Not give offense to any man;*
2. *Endure sufferings and persecutions courageously;*
3. *Preserve the chastity of our station in life;*
4. *Keep our heart free from all inordinate love for earthly things.*

(*ad. 1.*) "Giving no offense to any man." St. Paul could say this of himself in truth; for, so far from giving offense to any man, his life and acts were a glorious pattern for believers and unbelievers. Let us guard against giving scandal or bad example, guard against being an occasion of sin to any one. Let us consider the greatness of this sin! He that gives scandal is the adversary of Christ, a murderer of souls, a demon in human form. "Woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh."—*Matt.* 18: 7. Be careful not to say or do anything which has even the appearance of evil, that you may not be the occasion, far less the cause, of any person's sin; on the contrary, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."—*Matt.* 5: 16.

(*ad. 2.*) "*In all things let us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in tribulation, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in prisons, in seditions, in labors, in watchings, in fastings.*" The whole life of St. Paul was an uninterrupted chain of tribulations and sufferings, and the word of Jesus was literally fulfilled in him: "I will show him how great things he must suffer for the sake of my name."—*Acts* 9: 16. Of the Jews five times did he receive forty stripes save one; for years he languished in the prisons at Rome; the Jews several times raised commotions against him, as in Pisidia (*Acts* 13: 50), at Iconium (*Acts* 14: 2), at Thessalonica (*Acts* 17: 5), where he was in imminent danger of losing his life. On his journeys and in the preaching of the Gospel he was obliged to endure hunger and thirst, vigils and fasting, cold and nakedness, fatigue and shipwreck, contumely and false accusations, interior and exterior sufferings, in a word, tribulations of every sort. But all these things were not able to make him impatient or discouraged; the more the clouds of adversity and suffering lowered

around him, the more his courage grew, and full of zeal, he exclaimed? "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation: or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? —*Rom.* 8: 35.

(*ad.* 3) *In chastity.* The Apostle understands here mainly virginal chastity which he preserved during his whole life, and which he recommended to the Christians, when he said: "I would that all men were even as myself (perfectly continent). It is good for them if they so continue, even as I."—*I. Cor.* 7: 7, 8. Virginal purity, or the single state, is preferable to the married state, as St. Paul says again: "He that giveth his virgin in marriage, doeth well, and he that giveth her not, doeth better."—*I. Cor.* 7: 38. Single as well as married persons should take to heart the word of the Apostle: "Know you not, that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? Glorify and bear God in your body."—*I. Cor.* 6: 19, 20.

(*ad.* 4.) The Apostle in saying: *We live as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as needy, yet enriching many; as having nothing, and possessing all things*, declares that his heart is not attached to anything earthly, wherefore he also asserts elsewhere: "I esteem all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ."—*Phil.* 3: 8. The reason why St. Paul counts all earthly goods—riches, honors, and pleasures—but as dung, is because that which Jesus Christ promises and gives infinitely excels all that the world can give.

This should also be our disposition. We should have no inordinate desire after any temporal thing whatsoever; nor is there anything which we should so love and desire, so eagerly seek to obtain, that in our quest of it we would not stop even at offending God. The will of God and the salvation of our soul come first; we are allowed to seek and to love temporal things only so far as they may be necessary or useful for our salvation. Let us examine ourselves and see if we inordinately desire, seek, and love anything earthly.

#### PERORATION.

Let us put in practice, by word and example, what St. Paul teaches us in the epistle for this day. Let us renew our fervor in the service of God and in solicitude for the salvation of our souls. Let us make a good use of the innumerable graces which we receive from God for our purification and sanctification, remembering that one day we shall have to give an account of every grace we have received, and that our

eternal salvation depends on the timely and fervent use of grace. "Provide things good not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men," (*Rom. 12: 17*); "From all appearance of evil refrain yourselves," (*I. Thes. 5: 22*); "Be patient in tribulation," (*Rom. 12: 12*), and "Be humbled under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in the time of visitation."—*I. Pet. 5: 6*. "Refrain yourselves from carnal desires, which war against the soul," (*I. Pet. 2: 11*), and "Love not the world, nor those things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life. And the world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof. But he that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever."—*I. John 2: 15-17*.

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## FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

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**GOSPEL.** *St. Matt. 4: 1-11.* At that time: Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards hungry. And the tempter coming, said to him: If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said: It is written, "Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." Then the devil took him up into the holy city, and set him upon the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him: If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written: "That he hath given his angels charge over thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest perhaps thou hurt thy foot against a stone." Jesus said to him: It is written again "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Again the devil took him up into a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. And said unto him: All these I will give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me. Then Jesus saith to him: Begone, Satan, for it is written: "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve." Then the devil left him. and behold, angels came and ministered to him.

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## 1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

### JESUS FASTS, AND OVERCOMES SATAN.

At the age of thirty Jesus manifested his Divinity, which was hidden in his infancy and youth. He manifested himself first to the Jews because the promise of the Messiah was first made to them and their forefathers. He therefore presented himself to receive publicly the baptism of St. John, upon which occasion the heavens were opened,

and the Holy Ghost was seen to descend upon him, in the form of a dove, and a voice was heard from heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Immediately after his baptism, he retired into the desert, where he fasted forty days and forty nights, and then was tempted by the devil. He who was God could not sin, yet he permitted himself to be tempted, that by his complete victory over the tempter of mankind he might merit for us that grace by which all temptations are overcome. Let us consider, then,

*I. That Jesus fasts forty days and forty nights;*

*II. That Jesus is tempted three times by Satan, and that he overcomes him.*

### PART I.

*When Jesus had fasted forty days and forty nights he was afterwards hungry.*

#### *1. Jesus fasted—*

(a.) *In order to atone for the sin of our first parents.* They had in a most sinful manner gratified their desire of eating, by tasting the forbidden fruit. By this sin they lost for themselves and their posterity the love of God and his grace, and plunged themselves into the greatest misery. Jesus repaired this sin by his fasting. St. Augustine says: "As the first Adam had forfeited the prerogative of immortality by the intemperance of the palate, so the second Adam should recover immortality by abstinence."

(b.) *To teach us that we should make use of fasting as a means of penance.* Fasting is a means of penance in a double relation: *First*, it stays the anger of God and averts the chastisements which otherwise should fall upon us. Witness the Ninevites.—*Jonas 3: 5, etc.* *Secondly*, is accepted vicariously by Almighty God in lieu and satisfaction of the temporal punishments due to us for venial sins unrepented or the temporal punishment due to mortal sins even when remitted as to its guilt. Like all other good works, fasting with prayer and almsgiving quenches for us the fires of purgatory or shortens our stay in its flames.

(c.) *To show us by his example that fasting is a principal means of guarding against sin.* Fasting wonderfully aids the soul to establish her rightful mastery over the flesh. As the rider guides his steed by means of a bridle, so the Christian his sensuality by fasting, and subjects it to the law of God. Hence St. Cyprian says: "Fasting tames all rebellion of the flesh, breaks the tyranny of the palate, and adorns man. It confines the inordinate motions in a grave, binds down ex-

travagant desires, and, united with humility, teaches the servants of God to despise all worldly goods."

2. *Jesus fasted in the desert.* He might have fasted at Bethlehem, at Nazareth, at Jerusalem. Why did he fast in the desert?

(a.) To teach us that we should do our good works as much as possible in secret, for he who in them seeks human praise, has already received his reward. Hence Jesus says: "Take heed that you do not your justice before men, that you may be seen by them, otherwise you shall not have a reward from your Father who is in heaven."—*Matt. 6: 1.* Of fasting he says in particular: "When thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not fasting to men, but to the Father, who is in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will reward thee."—*Matt. 6: 18.*

(b.) To give us an example that, during this holy season, we should spiritually go into the desert, that is, detach ourselves from earthly things more than at other times, and occupy ourselves with heavenly things. The Church now forbidding solemn marriages and enjoyments, imitates thereby that we should lead a retired life, and devote ourselves with particular fervor to the exercises of religion, such as prayer, spiritual reading, hearing the word of God, and the reception of the Sacraments. Alas! many live not a whit holier during Lent than at other times; they eat and drink, and enjoy themselves, and show no more fervor than if it were not Lent. These are not good Christians.

3. *Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights.*

(a.) Why does the Evangelist say that Jesus fasted forty nights? To distinguish the fast of Jesus from that of the Jews, who fasted only during the day, but ate in the evening. But Jesus kept a rigorous fast during all the time that he remained in the desert, not only by day, but also by night. Indeed, a rigorous but necessary fast for the atonement of our sins, since man sins not only by day, but also by night.

(b.) Why did Jesus fast just *forty days*? There is a mysterious meaning in this number. God gave us ten commandments, which are transgressed in a fourfold manner: in thoughts, in words, in actions, and in omissions. To sin against the ten commandments in a fourfold manner, gives the number forty. Christ fasted forty days to give us an example that we should do penance for forty days, because we have sinned in a forty-fold way. This forty days' fast was prefigured by Moses and Elias, for Moses was upon Mount Sinai forty days without eating or drinking, and Elias, after having been miraculously strength-

ened by the bread of angels, walked forty days and forty nights without eating or drinking, till he reached Mount Horeb.—*Ex.* 24: 28; *III. Kings* 19: 8.

In imitation of the forty days' fast of Jesus, the Apostles instituted the forty days' fast, and the Church imposes it upon us as a duty to imitate at least somewhat the example of Jesus, and to deprive ourselves during this time of some meat and drink. St. John Chrysostom says: 'Before our divine Saviour went into the combat and temptations which the devil prepared for him, he fasted forty days, giving us all an example that, by fasting and an austere life, we must arm ourselves against the assaults of the devil.' We must keep strictly the forty days' fast, in order to make satisfaction for our sins, to appease God's wrath, and to find mercy and grace before his tribunal.

4. The Gospel, in saying that *afterwards he was hungry*, expresses that he was a true man, and therefore experienced hunger, like every other man who eats nothing for some time. By merely human power, however, Jesus could not have fasted forty days and nights, that is, he could not have abstained from all meat and drink, but he wished to support his human nature by his Divinity to enable it to sustain the forty days' fast; the feeling of hunger, however, he would not suppress, as he also accepted in his person all other interior and exterior sufferings.

Jesus having, for the love of us, fasted so long, shall we refuse to accept in our persons the little difficulties of fasting? Shall we find it too arduous, during the holy season of Lent, to deprive ourselves of some meat and drink, and to abstain on Fridays and a few other days from flesh meat? Should we be worthy of the name of *Christian* if we would not willingly undergo so slight a mortification?

## PART II.

1. The devil tempted Jesus to make him fall, if possible, and as all temptations are insinuated into our souls either by pleasure, by honors, or by riches, the tempter had the boldness to tempt him by these three enticements:

(a.) *By pleasure*, when he said to him, "Bid that these stones be made bread." Jesus was hungry after he had fasted forty days and forty nights. The devil made use of this circumstance to tempt him: "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Satan could know that Jesus was the Son of God, since St. John the Baptist had publicly confessed him as such — *John* 1: 34. But as Jesus appeared in great poverty and lowliness, the devil still doubted, and to remove his doubt, he said: "If thou be the Son of God." This temp-



tation contained nothing bad in itself, but it would have been humiliating and unbecoming for Jesus to do what the devil suggested, and to work a miracle for the gratification of his desire of eating. Therefore he rejected the enticement, saying: "Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." In other words, it is not absolutely necessary for man, in order to preserve life, to have bread or any other kind of food. God is able to preserve life by extraordinary means. Thus he fed the Israelites in the desert with manna for forty years; the Prophet Elias with bread and meat at the torrent of Carith, which ravens brought daily in the morning and in the evening; and on his flight in the desert, with a hearth-cake, which the angel showed him.—*III. Kings: 17: 3-6; 19: 5, 6.* Jesus wished to indicate by this answer that we should be more solicitous for the preservation of our supernatural than of our natural life, because the soul is of greater value than the body.

(b.) *By pride*, when he suggested to him to throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple for vainglory and ostentation, that he might be received by the hands of angels; but Jesus rejected the tempter, saying to him: "It is written again, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

(c.) *By riches*, and, in fact, by all temptations, when he showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and promised that he should give him all these, if, falling down, he would adore him. By this temptation the devil really showed himself a devil, a creature who, governed by immeasurable pride, desires nothing more than to put himself in the place of God, and to be adored. Jesus, therefore, with a holy indignation, rejected him, saying: "Begone, Satan, for it is written: 'The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve.'" Seeing himself discovered, the devil, full of confusion and shame, fled; and behold! angels came and ministered to him; that is, they brought nourishment, which his humanity needed, and adored him.

2. Here we have some very beautiful lessons for our instruction.

(a.) *Why did Jesus permit himself to be tempted?* To repair the sin of our first parents, who succumbed to the temptations of the devil. The devil had enticed Adam and Eve by the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life. By the concupiscence of the eyes, when he turned their eyes to the forbidden fruit, and excited in their hearts a liking for this fruit; by the concupiscence of the flesh, when he represented the fruit as very beautiful to the eye and sweet to the taste, so that they longed for it; by the

pride of life, representing to them that, by eating of it, they should become like God. In the same manner he also tempted Jesus, by the gratification of the sensual desire of eating, when he suggested to him to make the stones bread; by the pride of life, when he suggested to him to throw himself from the pinnacle of the temple, and thus manifest himself to the whole world as the Son of God; and lastly, by the concupiscence of the eyes, or covetousness, when he promised to give him all the kingdoms of the world as the price of adoration. Thus the temptation of Jesus is most intimately connected with that of our first parents, and what Satan had gained with Adam and Eve, he lost again through Jesus.

(b.) Whereas Jesus, the Son of God, himself was tempted, no one of us need wonder if he be tempted, though he may lead even the most holy life. Satan hates men so much that he would destroy them all by one blow if he had the power. He pursues the good generally more than he does the wicked. The latter belong to him already, but the former he strives to bring also under his yoke. Hence we read of many Saints having suffered the greatest and most lasting temptations. The devil usually tempts those most vehemently who are really converted. As Pharaoh, when the Israelites had departed from Egypt, pursued them with his whole army, to bring them back into slavery, so the devil is enraged against those souls who by a real conversion have escaped his dominion, and assaults them with all kinds of temptations, to reduce them into his power. He, therefore, who wishes to serve God and to save his soul, must be prepared for temptations. He must not, however, be wavering in his confidence, for God suffers no one to be tempted above that which he is able.—*I. Cor. 10: 13.*

(c.) The devil still tempts us to the same sins to which he enticed our first parents and our Saviour—namely, to sensuality, ambition, and covetousness, or, to concupiscence of the flesh, to concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life. And how many souls fall victims to these three enticements! Who can number the sins which are committed by pleasure, ambition, and covetousness?

(d.) Let us learn of Jesus what we are to do, that we may be able to overcome temptation. We must—

1. *Go into the desert*; that is, we must love solitude, lead a retired life, and shun the proximate occasion of sin.

2. *Fast*; that is, not only keep the appointed fast-days, but in general live piously and soberly. For, as intemperance in eating and drinking is the cause of many sins, so the mortification of the sensual

appetite with sobriety is an excellent preventive against the enticements to sin, especially against impurity.

3. *Pray*, that we may obtain of God light and strength to overcome the temptations: "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation."—*Mark* 14: 38.

4. *Keep in mind the word of God*; for example, when we are tempted to pride: "He that exalteth himself shall be humbled," (*Luke* 14: 11); to impurity: "Fornicators and adulterers shall not possess the kingdom of God," (*I. Cor.* 6: 9, 10); to covetousness: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"—*Matt.* 16: 26.

5. *Banish the temptations at once.* A spark that falls on the hand will not burn and wound you if you fling it away at once, but if you leave it on the hand even a few moments it will burn and pain you. Thus it is with temptations. You must not parley with them, but banish them at once. The brothers of St. Thomas of Aquin sent a female into his room to tempt him, but he took hold of a burning piece of wood and drove her away.

#### PERORATION.

The gospel of this day concludes with the words: "And, behold, angels came and ministered to him." Behold the reward that awaits you, if you fight against all temptations and overcome them; the holy angels, especially your guardian angel, will look down upon you with pleasure, and protect you with increased solicitude. And how happily you shall die if you can honestly say of yourselves that you have fought the good fight! The angels of God will protect you in the last decisive battle against the final assaults, and lead your souls into the joys of eternal life. Amen.

## FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

## 3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

THE ASSAULTS OF SATAN AND THE MEANS OF RENDERING THEM  
INEFFECTUAL.

"Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil."—  
*Matt. 4: 1.*

The devil had the temerity three different times to tempt our Lord, in order to induce him to sin and to make void the work of our Redemption. Let us, therefore, not wonder if he tempt us, and day and night lie in wait for our destruction. He knows that we are called to occupy the place in heaven which he lost by his intolerable pride; therefore he entertains the greatest envy against us, and uses all his exertions to deprive us of heaven. St. Thomas of Aquin says: "The envy which the devil feels when he thinks of a creature formed of the earth occupying his place in heaven and enjoying the sight of God, burns him more than the pitchy and sulphurous flames of hell." Therefore St. Peter compares him "to a roaring lion, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour."—*I. Peter 5: 8.* I intend to speak to-day on the assaults of Satan and the means of rendering them ineffectual, by answering the two following questions:

- I. How does the evil spirit pursue us?*
- II. What must we do to render his assaults ineffectual?*

## PART I.

The evil spirit endeavors to render men unhappy for time and eternity.

## 1. For time—

(a.) *By operating upon them outwardly and endeavoring to injure them in their goods and possession, in their bodies and life.*

Examples from Holy Writ: Job. The devil robbed him of everything he possessed, and smote him with a terrible disease, which caused him intolerable pains. In the Gospel we read of a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years; she was bent down and could not look upwards at all. Jesus healed her.—*Luke 13: 11-13.* Again, we read that the devil made a man deaf and dumb; that the evil spirits, whom Jesus cast out of two that were possessed, went into a herd of swine

and the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.—*Matt.* 8: 28-32.

(b.) *By taking bodily possession* of people, and producing in them all kinds of preternatural and horrible delusions, such as melancholy and various corporal infirmities. People who are in such a way taken possession of by evil spirits, are called *possessed* by the devil. That persons may be thus possessed, the Sacred Scripture proves in many places: *Mark* 5: 1-13; *Luke* 11: 14. The Gospel frequently speaks of Jesus having cast out devils. Thus we read in Matthew's Gospel (8: 16): "And when evening was come, they brought to him many that were possessed with devils; and he cast out the spirit with *his word*; and all that were sick he healed." By the possessed with devils, we can not understand sick persons afflicted with natural evils, for the Gospel clearly distinguishes between the two, saying that Jesus *cast out* the spirit, and all that were sick he *healed*. Moreover, we read that the evil spirits spoke from within the persons possessed; that they went out from them, and went elsewhere—in short, that they acted as rational creatures. These things are quite inconsistent with the supposition that possession meant only one or other form of natural sickness.

The holy Fathers unanimously teach that the devil can take possession of the body of man, and in Church history and the Lives of the Saints there are found so many examples of devils being cast out, that one should reject all historical facts, if he should call in question the possibility of possession, or deny that such possession had ever actually occurred. It is true, there are not so many possessed by the devil in the New Law as there were in the Old, because Christ broke the power of the devil, but there always have been persons possessed, and there shall be such to the end of the world, because only at the end of the world shall Satan lose all his power.

Satan may operate upon man from the outside, or take possession of the body; still he has only so much power over him as God allows; without the will of God he can not hurt a hair of his head. But God sometimes gives him power over men, either to punish them for their sins, as was the case with the seven husbands of Sarah (*Tob.* 6), or to try them and give them an opportunity of practicing patience and other virtues. Example: Job, etc.

*For eternity.*

(a.) The whole endeavor of the devil is to make man lose his soul. For this he tempts him and uses all exertions to lead him astray, to keep him in sin, and to ruin him. We can not doubt this truth for a moment, since we find numberless proofs of it in Scripture and Tradition. Our first parents sinned by the devil's temptation.—*Gen.* 3. It

was the devil that put it in the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus.—*John* 13: 2. It was the devil that tempted Ananias to tell a lie to the Holy Ghost and to keep part of the price of the land sold.—*Acts* 5: 3. It was the devil that had the audacity to tempt even Jesus. All men, but especially the pious, are subject to these temptations of Satan. St. Paul, who was rapt into the third heaven, says of himself, that an angel of Satan buffeted him, that is, tempted him, for which thing he thrice besought the Lord, that it might depart from him.—*II. Cor.* 12: 7, 8. In the Lives of the Saints we read that the devil in many ways tempted them, and employed every possible artifice and stratagem to make them fall. The devil is a subtle enemy; he does not trouble himself much with sinners who are already in his snares, but he employs all weapons against the fervent servants of God, and does all he can to bring them under his dominion. St. Francis of Sales beautifully says: "The dogs do not attack those of the household, but only strangers, thus the devil does not assault those much who are already his. If, therefore, he seek one, it is a sign that he does not belong to him yet, and the greater the virtue of the person is, the more vehement the assaults he may expect from the devil."

(b.) *The devil tries various ways in his temptations.* He endeavors to spread false maxims and errors in the world, wherefore Jesus calls him an enemy, who, while men were asleep, oversowed cockle among the wheat.—*Matt.* 23: 36. He tries to take the good resolutions we make out of our hearts, that we may not execute them, as Jesus assures us.—*Luke* 8: 12. Moreover, he operates on the external senses of man, producing in him various images, motions, and inclinations, which often become the cause of violent temptations; he uses the particular circumstances and inclinations of men to tempt them and entice them to evil. He flatters the young, and paints the joys and enjoyments of the world in the most beautiful colors; he makes old people believe that they will live a long time yet, and therefore have plenty of time to work out their salvation; he entices the vain to pride, the avaricious to covetousness, the unchaste to voluptuousness, the irascible to revenge; in a word, he assaults every one in his most vulnerable spot and where he can overcome him with the least difficulty.

I must, however, remark here that not all temptations come from the devil. There are other sources of temptation—namely, our own concupiscence and inclination to evil, as St. James says: "Every man is tempted, being drawn away by his own concupiscence, and allured," *James* 1: 14; then the world with its illusions, scandals, and bad examples, as St. John says: "All that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life."—*I. John* 2: 16.

## PART II.

To render the assaults of the devil ineffectual we must—

1. *Pray.*

(a.) Christ himself says: "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation."—*Matt.* 26: 41. By prayer we obtain the grace of God, by which we can overcome even the most violent temptations. What power prayer has against the devil, the history of young Tobias teaches us. He was to take Sarah, Raguel's daughter, for a wife. Now, Sarah was possessed by an evil spirit, who had already killed seven husbands to whom she had been married, one after the other, on account of incontinence. Raguel feared the same fate for Tobias, and therefore hesitated to give him Sarah for a wife. But Sarah and Tobias had recourse to prayer, and persevered in it for three days, and behold, the evil spirit could not injure them.—*Tob.* 7. We have, therefore, an easy means to render the assaults and temptations of the devil ineffectual, that is, to have recourse to prayer. St. John Chrysostom says: "The roaring of the lion does not drive away wild beasts as much as prayer does the evil spirits."

(b.) It matters little what prayers we say in time of temptation; every prayer is good, if said with humility, devotion, and confidence.

Very effectual against the attacks of the devil, are—

First. *The sign of the cross.* St. Chrysostom says: "We vehemently tremble when we behold places where malefactors were executed; how must not the devil be terrified when he beholds the cross, that weapon which struck him a mortal wound. The evil spirits scarcely get the first glimpse of this sign, when, full of fear and trembling, they take to flight."

Secondly. *The invocation of the holy name of Jesus.* "In my name they shall cast out devils."—*Mark* 16: 17. Numberless Christians have been freed by the invocation of the holy name of Jesus, not only from temporal evils caused by the devil, but also from his temptations. "The power of Christ is so great that the evil spirits sink back into nothingness before it, and can not even stand before the invocation of the name of Jesus."—*St. Athanasius.*

Thirdly. *The use of holy water.* St. Theresa says: "To banish evil spirits so that they will not return, there is nothing more effectual than the holy water." There must be great virtue in holy water, and she adds: "It is no empty imagination; I have often experienced it." A

missionary priest in China mentions it as a well-known fact, that possessed persons, of whom there are many among the Gentiles, by the sprinkling with holy water are usually freed from the evil spirits.

## 2 *Resist earnestly.*

There is a great difference between the attacks of the devil and those of a man. If a man who is our superior in strategy and strength attack us, our resistance is useless, and we shall be overcome. But if the devil assault us, it is in our power to overcome him, notwithstanding his power and subtlety, for it is not we alone who fight, but the Almighty God who fights in us and with us, and helps us on to victory. In view of this divine succor, the Apostle says: "I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me."—*Phil.* 4: 13. Example: St. Justina, having become a Christian, had vowed her virginity to God. Aglaides, a Pagan youth, wished to espouse her, but she rejected the offer. The youth used promises and flatteries, but all in vain. He went to a sorcerer in order to conquer Justina with the help of the evil one. The sorcerer conjured the powers of darkness, and Justina was obliged to endure the most violent temptations day and night; but she earnestly resisted, prayed, fasted, and invoked Jesus and Mary for protection and help, signed herself with the sign of the cross, and, behold! the temptation ceased. The devil told the sorcerer that Justina was a Christian, and that he had no power over Christians who courageously fight and confide in the Lord. The sorcerer Cyprian became a Christian, and obtained with Justina the crown of martyrdom.

(b.) It is, therefore, groundless for some to lay their sins exclusively to the charge of the devil, and say: "It was the devil made me do this or that." If they had not listened to the devil, he could not have allured them to sin. "The devil is like a chained dog," says St. Augustine, "he can bite no one unless he imprudently goes near him. Yes, he may growl, show his teeth, and snarl, but he can not bite us, for he can go only the length of his chain. Show him the cross, and he will fly back into his fiery kennel of hell." And again St. Augustine says: "As the old enemy is strong with those who assent to him, so he is weak against those who resist him. If you consent to his suggestions, you can no more tame him than a lion, but if you resist him, you can trample upon him as upon an ant."

## PERORATION.

Make use of those two means, and the devil can do you no harm. *Pray.* As soon as you perceive a temptation within you, act like little children, who, when they see a wild beast, run to their father and mother,



or at least cry for help; therefore, go to God in your temptations, and ask his help, grace, and mercy. *Make the sign of the cross frequently, invoke the holy name of Jesus, sprinkle yourselves with holy water, and recommend yourselves to the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the holy Angels and Saints.* Avoid every kind of sin, but especially impurity, cursing and blaspheming; and live piously, for over pious Christians the devil has no power; at all events, he cannot injure them as regards their salvation. If you perceive any temptation, resist manfully, and repeatedly say to yourselves, "Lord, I would rather die than sin." If you follow these rules, you shall be able to persevere in the grace of God, and as conquerors over all the enemies of your salvation, you shall receive hereafter the crown of victory. Amen.

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## FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

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# 4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

## THE STREWING OF ASHES ON OUR HEADS AS AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HOLY SEASON OF LENT.

*"When he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards hungry."—Matt. 4: 2.*

The Church begins the holy season of Lent by blessing ashes and putting them on the heads of the faithful. From this act Ash Wednesday has its name. The blessing of the ashes begins with an antiphon and a verse of a psalm, in which the mercy and grace of God are implored. After that come four prayers, which express the signification of the blessing of the ashes. The ashes are to become a remedy for all who penitently confess their sins; they are to procure for those on whose heads they are put, the pardon of all their sins and the reward which is promised to the penitent; they are moreover to fill all with the spirit of compunction, and to give us the courage and strength, like the Ninevites, zealously to do penance. After these prayers the ashes are sprinkled with holy water and incensed. After the blessing of the ashes, the priest puts some of them first on his own head and then on the heads of those present, after which he says another prayer for protection in the forthcoming spiritual combat. I shall speak to-day on the distribution of the ashes, by which the Church introduces the forty days' fast and explain to you how the ceremony of Ash Wednesday is—

- I. A symbol of penance;*  
*II. An exhortation to penance.*

## PART I.

1. Ashes are in themselves a symbol of penance. The color of the ashes reminds us of penance, for dark gray is the color of penance. The ashes, moreover, have a caustic virtue and are used for the cleaning of soiled clothes. In like manner penance cleanses our heart and washes away the sins with which it is contaminated. Ashes strewed on a field, are a good fertilizer; they fructify gardens and meadows, and make the plants grow rapidly. So also penance causes us to grow in virtue and bring forth the fruits of justice.

2. *Ashes were in the Old Law a figure of penance.*

(a.) When Jonas announced to the Ninevites the destruction of their city, "they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from the least, and sat in ashes."—*Jon.* 3: 4-6.

(b.) King David says of himself: "I did eat ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping."—*Ps.* 101: 10. He mingled his bread with ashes or put ashes on his bread, that he might even at his meals be reminded of his sins, and, consequently, of the necessity of doing penance for them.

(c.) Thamar, David's daughter, after her disgrace, "put ashes on her head, and went on crying."—*II. Kings* 13: 19. We read the same of Job (42: 6), of the widow Judith (9: 1), of Mardochai (*Esth.* 4: 9), and many others.

(d.) When Jeremiah the Prophet, in the name of God, announced to the Jews that great chastisements should come upon them, he commanded them to put ashes on their heads: "Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; and sprinkle yourselves with ashes, ye leaders of the flock; for the days of your slaughter and your dispersion are accomplished, and you shall fall like precious vessels."—*Jerem.* 25: 34.

3. We also find ashes to be a figure of penance in the New Law.

(a.) As Church history proves, in the earliest times ashes were put on the heads of public sinners. All those who had the misfortune to sin grievously and who wished to recover the grace of reconciliation, asked for a public penance on Ash Wednesday. With this intention, they appeared barefooted and in mourning garments in the church; the bishop, whom they most humbly by weeping and wailing asked for pardon, invested them with penitential garments, and put ashes on their

heads, sprinkled them with holy water, and, with the clergy, said over them the Penitential Psalms and the Litany of the Saints. Then he delivered an address to them, in which, with impressive words, he exhorted them to penance, and, in procession, led them out of the church, saying to them in tears: "Behold, you are rejected to-day from the threshold of the Church, your holy mother, because of your sins and vices, as Adam, the first man, was cast out of paradise, because of his transgressions." Standing upon the threshold of the Church, he finally exhorted them, that they should not despair of the divine mercy, but by fasting, prayer, pilgrimages, alms, and other good works, make themselves worthy to be received into the Church again on Holy Thursday. They then at once commenced the most rigorous exercises of penance, in order to become again participants of the grace of reconciliation.

(b.) This public penance afterwards became obsolete, but the custom of putting ashes on the head has been retained. Even when only the public sinners were sprinkled with ashes, as a matter of course other Christians were usually present, who, from a motive of humility and devotion, had ashes put on their heads also. In the year 1091, the Council of Beneventum decreed that the ashes should be distributed to all, that all might the more emphatically be reminded of the necessity of penance. Since that time the custom of putting ashes on the head has existed throughout the whole Catholic Church, and there is now no parish church in which ashes are not blessed and sprinkled on the faithful. From this blessing of ashes and sprinkling of the faithful with them, the first day of the forty days' fast bears the name of Ash Wednesday.

This ceremony is certainly meet and proper for us all. We are all sinners. We all stand in need of God's mercy and forgiveness. "Unless you do penance you shall all likewise perish." Unless we do penance, we too shall perish. Expressive of this idea is the ordinance of Ash Wednesday. Kneeling to receive the ashes, we profess ourselves sinners indeed, but by God's mercy contrite sinners, and hope to obtain pardon from him who will never despise or desert an humble and contrite heart.

## PART II.

The distribution of ashes is also an exhortation to penance. This will become manifest to us, if we consider—

1. *Whence the ashes come.* These ashes are procured by burning the *palms* blessed the Palm Sunday before, and with which the procession was made.

(a.) Why are the ashes of the palm-branches used? The palm is an emblem of peace, which one enjoys after combats and victories. So

the inhabitants of Jerusalem saluted Jesus at his entrance into the city as King of Peace, carrying boughs of palm in their hands. The Saints in heaven are represented with palms in their hands, to signify that, after their combats and victories here below, they now enjoy peace in heaven. In the ecclesiastical sense, therefore, the boughs of palm indicate eternal rest or felicity in heaven. The palm-branches, reduced to ashes, remind us, then, that by sin heaven was lost for us, and that we can acquire it by our natural powers no more than it is naturally possible for the boughs of palm burnt to ashes again to become verdant and grow. What an appalling truth! The boughs of palm burnt to ashes are, however, not entirely destroyed—the ashes are left. So we, although sinners and deprived of grace, are not irretrievably lost, like the fallen angels; we have a Redeemer, and through his merits can look up to God with confidence, and restored to grace by penance, can hope by God's mercy to persevere to the end and at last secure the felicity of heaven.

(b.) The ashes are from the blessed boughs of palm, with which we went to meet our divine Saviour on Palm Sunday in solemn procession. We are reminded of Jesus, whom we behold no longer at a distance, as did the people in the Old Law, but who has already accomplished the work of our Redemption, and remains always in our midst giving grace,—giving peace and promise of victory.

2. *What the ashes are.* They are what remains of burnt things—a picture of the vanity and nothingness of all temporal goods and pleasures. St. Augustine says: "The fish nibbles at the hook and eats and devours with joy what it gets from the bait, as long as it does not notice the hook; but as soon as the fisherman pulls the line, it finds itself captured, and by its motions in the water shows no longer the joys it did before. So it is with men in regard to this world. They enjoy the goods which it baits for them, and imagine themselves happy; but this happiness does not last long; then they feel nothing but pain and remorse over those things which they enjoyed, and on which they remained hanging." Witness Solomon, who, in all that he possessed and enjoyed, found nothing but vanity and affliction of spirit. The priest, by sprinkling us with ashes, reminds us of the vanity and frailty of all earthly things, and exhorts us to be solicitous for our immortal souls.

3. *When and how the ashes are distributed.* They are put on the head, in which pride has its seat, wherefore we say of a proud man: "He carries a high head." Nothing is more opposed to penance than pride. Witness, the proud Pharisee and the humble Publican. The

Church, by putting ashes on our heads, tells us that we have no reason to be proud, since we are nothing but dust and ashes.

(b.) The ashes are put on *in the form of a cross*. The sign of the cross reminds us of Jesus the Crucified, and consequently of the important truth that we can do penance and escape eternal death only through the merits of Jesus Christ. The putting on of ashes in the form of a cross is an exhortation to penance, for if Jesus died on the cross for the atonement of our sins, shall we think it arduous to undergo the austerities of penance in order to appease God?

4. Lastly, the priest, whilst putting the ashes on the faithful, says: "Remember, man, that thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return." To whom should these words not be an earnest admonition to penance? If the sinner would think of death and the terrible lot that awaits him after death, it would be impossible for him to continue in impenitence; his conscience would be aroused and give him no rest till he should break his fetters of sin and be converted. "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin."—*Eccles. 7: 40*. "Descend frequently in thought into your grave, that you may turn your eyes from vanity, and beware of offending God. By this simple and easy means you will be acquiring every day an immortal crown of glory in heaven."—*Ambrose*.

#### PERORATION.

The sprinkling with ashes, then, with which Lent begins, is in effect a very proper and salutary ordinance of Holy Church, for it is not only a symbol of penance, but also an admonition to penance. I only wish that you would put into practice what it signifies, and that to which the ceremony silently but forcibly exhorts you, that during the forty days' fast you may bring forth fruits worthy of penance. Renounce sin, do penance, live piously and soberly, that you may be reconciled with God, according to the word of the Prophet: "If the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed, and keep all my commandments, and do judgment and justice living he shall live, and shall not die."—*Ezech. 18: 21*. Amen.

## FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

## 5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

WHAT WEAPONS WE MUST USE TO OVERCOME SATAN.

"Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil."—  
*Matt. 4: 1.*

Armed with three weapons, viz., a sword, a spear, and a shield, Goliath the giant advanced from the ranks of the Philistines, and challenged for forty consecutive days any man of the armies of Israel to fight him.—*I. Kings 17: 45.* With three weapons does the infernal Goliath, the devil, attack man, and these weapons are *pleasure, pride, and riches*, or 'the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life.'—*I. John 2: 16.*

With these three weapons he attacked our first parents in Paradise, *and conquered them*; with these three weapons, four thousand years later, he attacked Jesus, *and was conquered by him.*

The devil remains always the same, the weapons which he used in the combat with our first parents and Christ he makes use of against us to make us fall. The question now is: What weapons must we use to overcome Satan? This question I will answer for you to-day. I say—

- I. If Satan tempt you to PLEASURE, fight against him by FASTING*
- II. If he tempt you to COVETOUSNESS, fight against him by ALMS.*
- III. If he tempt you to PRIDE, fight against him by PRAYER.*

## PART I.

## 1. If the devil tempt you to pleasure.

(a.) By pleasure I understand the predominant desire of man after that which appears pleasing to his sensual nature, be it lawful or forbidden. To the latter class belong especially the sins against holy purity, to which every human being is more or less tempted. Not only those who are little solicitous about the welfare of their soul, but also fervent servants of God, frequently have hard battles to fight against the spirit of impurity, and are never entirely secure against his attacks. How piously did St. Benedict, St. Jerome, St. Anthony, St. Francis live, and yet they were obliged to endure not a few impure temptations. St. Paul even, who was rapt into the third heaven, complains that there was given him a sting of the flesh.—*II. Cor. 12: 7.*

(b.) Need we wonder then that the vice of impurity was prevalent in the world from the beginning, and caused great and widespread moral devastation? Examples. The people in Noah's time and their destruction by the deluge. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. The vice of voluptuousness among the Gentiles was raised to the dignity of a religious practice. What is the condition of things among Christians now-a-days? The unripe youth, the mature, and the aged are addicted to the vice of impurity. Pure, chaste virginal souls—how rare they are!

(c.) And yet nothing is more necessary for a Christian who wishes to save his soul, than chastity according to his state of life. He that observes it not, single or married, shall be damned, "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, nor sodomites, shall possess the kingdom of God,"—*I. Cor. 6: 9, 10.*

2. *Fight against him by fasting.* It can not be denied that the unrestrained use of meat and drink is the cause of many carnal temptations. The body which is kept and fed well resembles a wild horse which strikes, bites, and runs away even with a skillful rider. Christians who overcharge their bodies with food and drink are little disposed for prayer and other pious exercises; it is, therefore, an easy task for the devil to tempt them and make them fall. But he who subdues his appetite and fasts, gives the spirit the dominion over the animal propensities, and is able to repel the assaults of the unclean spirit, by prayer and other spiritual exercises. St. Cyprian says. "In fasting the filth of vices dries up, lustfulness languishes, bad desires weaken, voluptuousness flies, and the heat of *Ætna* is extinguished." A young man once complained to an aged religious that he was troubled very much by impure temptations. The religious replied that he was never much troubled with them. Upon the question, what means he used, the old man replied: I never indulge my hunger and thirst to satiety, and thus it comes that an impure temptation hardly ever molests me; for I bring the flesh under the subjection of the spirit by mortification.

(b.) Do you also employ this weapon by observing the ecclesiastical precept of fasting during Lent. Abstain from flesh meat on the days on which its use is forbidden. He who is not so far master over his sensuality as to be able to abstain from flesh meat for a few days can not be expected to overcome impure temptations and live chastely. Be sparing in eating and drinking. All days in Lent except Sundays are fast days of precept, on one meal, with the allowance of a moderate collation in the evening, no lunches, large or small, being allowed between meals. Hard work, bodily infirmity and old age admit of ex-

ceptions. Live piously and soberly, that you may tame the concupiscence of the flesh and preserve that virtue so necessary—the virtue of purity.

## PART II.

### 1. If the devil tempt you to covetousness.

(a.) We may possess temporal goods, and employ diligence and care to keep and increase them, but we must not set our hearts and affections upon them, nor love them as we should love only our God and our own immortal souls. We must also in the acquisition of them avoid all injustice, and willingly give of our abundance to the poor. He who violates these precepts is in danger of losing his soul. "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.—*Matt.* 19: 24. "They who would become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition."—*I. Tim.* 6: 9.

(b.) Covetousness is a widely-spread vice, and to it may many a lost soul, in hell this moment, attribute its irreparable and everlasting ruin. A spiritual writer says: "There are three vices which plunge man into perdition: *pride*, *voluptuousness*, and *covetousness*; so that, by the Sacrament of Penance, out of a hundred proud persons about fifty are saved; out of a hundred voluptuous, about thirty; but out of a hundred of the covetous scarcely three are saved; and this because for the covetous an essential part of the penance consists in restitution, which is very arduous for man." Aripert, King of the Lombards, when dissatisfaction broke out in his army, wished to flee into France. For this purpose he took from the public treasury as much gold as he could carry, and fled at night. He was obliged to swim the river Tessino, but the great quantity of gold which he carried frustrated all his exertions, the weight of the precious metal dragged him to the bottom, and he found his death in the water. Thus he who lets his heart cling to gold and the temporal goods of this world, is drawn into the abyss of hell.

A few years ago the ship *Britannia*, which had on board a large consignment of Spanish dollars, was wrecked off the coast of Brazil. In the hope of saving some of them, several barrels were brought on deck, but the vessel was fast going to pieces, so that the only hope for life was to take at once to the boats. The last boat was about to shove off, when a young midshipman went back to see if any one was still on board. To his surprise, there was a man on deck with a hatchet in his hand, with which he had broken open several of the casks, the contents of which he was heaping up about him. "What are you do-



ing here?" shouted the youth. "Don't you know that the ship is fast going to pieces?" "The ship may go," said the man, "I have lived a poor wretch all my life, but I am determined to die rich." The officer's remonstrances were answered by another flourish of the hatchet, and the man was left to his fate. We should count such a person a madman, were it not that he has too many imitators, who seem determined at all hazards to die rich. Least of all risks do they consider that of losing their soul at any moment during the frantic struggle.

2. *Fight against him by alms.* The strongest weapon against covetousness is *liberality*. St. Chrysostom remarks very appropriately: "If wild animals be confined and kept in a dark place, they become more furious and intractable, but if you let them out, and accustom them to the sight of men, they lose their innate ferocity, and become as tame as sheep." So it is with riches. If riches be hoarded up they rage and howl like a lion. But if you take them out of the dark hole, the wallet, and distribute them among the poor, this wild beast will become as tame as a lamb, the traitor becomes protector and intercessor, and the dangerous cliff a secure harbor. Thus it is. The more you hoard money and the more miserly you guard against spending any, the more the love of money grows upon you; but the more liberal and charitable you are towards the poor, the more the love for money disappears, and the vice of covetousness finds no resting-place in the heart. "The love of money is the root of all evil."

(b.) With this weapon you must fight in the holy season of Lent. The Church in this holy season of penance prescribes abstinence from costly meats and drinks. By a conscientious observance of this ecclesiastical precept you will save something, which you ought to give to the poor. Guard your hearts against the vice of avarice, and practice the virtue of liberality, which is so acceptable to God. "Redeem your sins by works of mercy to the poor."

### PART III.

#### 1. If the devil tempt you to pride.

(a.) Nothing is more odious to God than *pride*. "Pride is hateful before God and men. Pride is the beginning of all sin; he that holdeth it, shall be filled with maledictions; and it shall ruin him in the end."—*Eccles.* 10: 7-15. Witness the rebellious angels, our first parents in Paradise, and the Scribes and Pharisees in the days of Christ.

(b.) Pride is a sin of which only few souls are entirely free. Most

people attribute the good which they do and have, not to God, but to themselves; they seek the praise and applause of the world, become dejected and indignant when they meet with humiliations, think themselves better than others, and desire everywhere to be preferred before others.

(c.) Although pride is not always a mortal sin, yet it brings many evils in its train; it takes all the merit from our good works, deprives us of many graces, leads to many sins, and prevents all progress in the way of virtue. If it once take deep root in the heart it removes us farther and farther from God, leads us into the greatest vices, and finally sinks us in eternal perdition.

2. *Fight against him by prayer.*

(a.) Prayer is one of the principal means of defense against every temptation, especially the temptation to pride. When we open our lips to pray, it is an exercise of humility, for to pray means in reality nothing else than to acknowledge that we are nothing, that we can not help ourselves, and that for this reason we turn to God, that he may give us what we need. The devil can not pray, because of his pride. He has not a particle of humility. Moreover, prayer is the key to the heart of God, by which we can obtain all goods and graces, and, consequently, also humility. "Amen, Amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you."—*John 16: 23.*

(b.) As often as the devil allures you to pride, have recourse to prayer; with this weapon you shall overcome his attacks, and preserve that virtue so necessary—humility. Pray and meditate. Call to mind all the humiliations which our Lord endured in his Passion and death. Consider how he was apprehended, dragged like a malefactor from one tribunal to another, derided as an idiot; how a robber and a murderer was preferred before him, and how he was crucified between two thieves. Such a consideration will be salutary to you, for you shall learn of Jesus to be meek and humble of heart.

PERORATION.

"All that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life." Christ overcame the world with its concupiscences; he obtained a complete victory over sensuality, pride, and covetousness. Let us follow him; let us use the weapons which the Church offers us in this holy season for our combat and victory. Let us fast, that we may render ourselves capable of taming our impure desires and of serving God in purity of body and soul. Let us give alms, that we may keep our hearts from all

covetousness. Let us pray and meditate, that we may keep away from us the spirit of pride and may remain humble. If we fight against Satan by fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, we shall, by the aid of God's grace, overcome all the enemies of our salvation, and obtain the crown of victory, which is life everlasting. Amen.

## FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

# 6. MORAL SKETCH.

### THE DUTY AND VALUE OF FASTING.

*"When he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards hungry."—Matt. 4: 2.*

The holy season of Lent has come around once more, in which we are to take various exercises of penance upon ourselves, but particularly to mortify the craving of the palate, or to fast. But how little is the precept of fasting observed! The Freethinker derides this precept; the sinner, who has much reason to afflict his soul, thinks himself exempt from this obligation; the lukewarm Christian frames excuses in order to exonerate himself from this imaginary burden. Many excuse themselves on account of bodily infirmity; many under the pretext of hard work. Many from a want of conscientiousness disregard the precept of fasting altogether and yield to their immoderate longing after enjoyments, eating without restraint of what is forbidden, to the great scandal of others.

How does it come that so many Christians disregard the obligation of fasting? Because they are not convinced of the obligation and the value of fasting. I shall speak to-day—

- I. On the obligation, and*
- II. On the value of fasting.*

### PART I.

Are we obliged to fast? Yes.

- 1. The example of Jesus obliges us.*

(a.) Jesus went into the desert and fasted forty days and forty nights, abstaining altogether from meat and drink. Do not imagine that Jesus did not experience the bitterness of fasting in his body, for as man he

felt the necessity of eating and drinking like any other man, and the Evangelist expressly says, *He was hungry*. It was not necessary for him to fast; he could have stilled his hunger at any moment by a miracle, because he was the Almighty. Then, he fasted not for the expiation of his sins, for he was holiness itself. He fasted only for our sake; he fasted in order to leave us an example and to apply the merits of his fast to us. It is written, says St. Ambrose, "He that professes to belong to Christ must walk as he walked. If, therefore, you claim to be a Christian you must do in your weakness what he did according to his perfection; he, who was without sin, fasted forty days; and you, who have grievously sinned, refuse to spend forty days in penance. He fasted for *our* sins, not for *his*, and you, Christians, will not fast for your own sins! How can your conscience be quiet? How can you call yourselves Christians, if you satiate yourselves when Jesus was hungry for your sake!"

(b.) Jesus is our model and pattern; according to him we must regulate ourselves, if we wish to work out our salvation and be saved. "Whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren."—*Rom.* 8: 29. What conformity should we have to Jesus, if, instead of mortifying ourselves, taming our sensuality, and fasting, we should know nothing of self-denial and refuse not the least gratification to the craving of the palate? And if we have no conformity to Christ how can we be saved?

2. *The express command of the Church obliges us to fast.*

(a.) Christ said: "The days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they shall fast."—*Matt.* 9: 15. Mindful of this prediction of their divine Master, and the example which he himself had given by his forty days' fast, the Apostles undoubtedly practiced this fast themselves, and urgently recommended it to the believers. Therefore many holy Fathers call the forty days' fast an apostolic tradition and ordinance. St. Jerome says: "We fast forty days according to apostolic tradition." Leo the Great says: "Let the apostolic ordinance of a forty days' fast be observed perfectly." This ordinance of the forty days' fast is most venerable for its age, and comes down to us through the centuries hallowed by the observance and approval of all the Fathers and Saints of the Church. Cold is the Christian, and weak his faith, and small his reverence for Holy Church and her sacred traditions, who will not cheerfully comply with the **Lenten** regulations.

(b.) In the primitive ages of Christianity the forty days' fast, though

not commanded under the penalty of sin, but only recommended, was observed in a very rigorous manner by the faithful. Their fervor rendered a precept superfluous. What kind of Christians should we be, if in this holy season we would not deprive ourselves of some meat and drink, when fasting is not only a good counsel, but also a strict precept?

(c.) When, in the lapse of time, this Christian fervor began to decrease more and more, the Church saw herself under the necessity of prescribing the forty days' fast as a precept. This was done in the fourth century, for St. Ambrose says: "The rest of the year, fasting is a virtue and deserves special reward, but not to fast during Lent is a mortal sin. The former is voluntary, but the latter is necessary; the free will resolves to do the former, but the most holy law commands the latter." This law, though greatly moderated, is in force to-day, and the Church every year inculcates it on the faithful by her pastors. He that does not keep the forty days' fast, evidently sins grievously against a strictly obligatory ecclesiastical precept.

(d.) But some say: Because fasting is only an ecclesiastical law, it is not so binding as the commandments. What an error! The Church is God's representative upon earth, and disobedience to her is ultimately nothing less than disobedience to God, for Christ says: "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."—*Luke* 10: 16. He that disregards the precept of fasting and boldly transgresses it, shows himself a contemner of Christ and the Father, the heavenly Father, and to him the words of Jesus apply: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican."—*Matt.* 18: 17.

### 3. *The salutary and worthy preparation for the holy celebration of Easter obliges us to fast.*

(a.) Easter is the annual memorial celebration of the accomplishment of the work of our Redemption. We must prepare ourselves for it, in order to apply to ourselves the fruit of Redemption. The preparation consists particularly in extirpating our bad habits and passions, changing our perverse will, and amending our lives. But what can be better adapted for this than a penitential fast by which the rebellious flesh is subdued, fuel taken from the concupiscence that burns within us, the spirit encouraged to wholesome meditations, and the heart moved to repentance. The Church therefore prescribes a forty days' fast, that all Christians, by true repentance, may be spiritually renewed, and by a total conversion be prepared for a worthy reception of the holy Sacraments.

(b.) The most ancient Fathers of the Church looked upon the Lenten fast as a preparation for the worthy celebration of the Easter festival and the reception by all the faithful, as was the wont, on that feast of the most holy Sacrament. St. Augustine says: "That we may receive more worthily the Sacraments of Redemption, we prepare ourselves for it by a salutary forty days' fast." Leo the Great says: "Because at no other time the spirit of perdition rages more against the members of Jesus, than when they are to celebrate the holiest of mysteries, the ordinance of the Holy Ghost very appropriately instructed the Christian people that during forty days, by penitential mortifications, they should prepare themselves for the celebration of Easter. He that does not observe the precept of the forty days' fast lacks the Christian spirit, and he can not be expected to prepare himself for Easter and receive the holy Sacraments with advantage."

## PART II.

Fasting is of great value, for by fasting—

1. *We make satisfaction to God for sins committed, and avert the punishment due to them.*

Every sin deserves punishment before God, the Judge and Avenger of all evil. But if we chastise ourselves, we stay the hand of God's avenging justice. "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."—*I. Cor.* 11: 31. Such a judgment of ourselves is the self-chastisement or penance inflicted on our bodies by fasting, and by this self-condemnation of ourselves for sins committed the divine punishment is averted. Witness the Ninevites, whose city was to be destroyed in forty days, but was spared on account of their repentance and fasting. "God had mercy with regard to the evil which he had said that he would do to them, and he did it not."—*Jon.* 3: 10. So with us. By fasting it is in our power to avert God's wrath. And as no one can glory in being without sin, so no one who is able should allow this salutary means for the expiation of the temporal punishments due to sin to pass unprofitable to himself.

2. *We protect ourselves from sin.*

(a.) St. Paul says: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh."—*Gal.* 5: 17. There is an incessant warfare going on between the higher and nobler faculties of the human soul and the lower and inferior animal propensities. And just as a prudent general tries to cut off from the enemy his source of supplies, to weaken him thereby and make him surrender, so the spirit should weaken the flesh, that source of all ammunition and supplies in the

spiritual warfare. This it can do by a temporary withdrawal of its wonted nourishment from the body, that the spirit may more easily overcome this, its sworn enemy. St. Augustine says: "If you had a horse too spirited, that might throw you off, would you not deprive him of some of his feed, in order to tame him by hunger? Why would you not by fasting tame your wild, mischievous body? He that deprives his body of nothing that is licit, will soon allow it what is illicit." Such a one, in spite of his good resolutions, will be allured and enticed to sin often enough by the concupiscence of his well-fed and pampered body. But he who mortifies his flesh withdraws from the flame of concupiscence the nourishing oil, so that, by-and-by, it will be extinguished. Hence St. Bernard says: "Fasting blots out not only past sins, but it prevents also future ones."

(b.) Do not say that fasting is an arduous means, repugnant to self-love. St. Augustine says: "Will you accuse a father of harshness or imprudence if he sometimes refuse his child something after which the child longs, in order to exercise him in obedience and self-denial? Or will you call a master imprudent and uncharitable if he punish his stubborn servant, and by chastisement keep him in subjection? Should a little mortification, such as the forty days' fast prescribed by the Church, appear too arduous, when there is question of rescuing the soul, and with it the body, from the everlasting fire of hell? How unreasonably and uncharitably do those Christians deal with themselves who disregard this precept and neglect this obligation!

3. *We render the practice of virtue easy, and obtain the more certainly God's grace and eternal salvation.*

(a.) In proportion as what is earthly within us is weakened by fasting, that which is heavenly grows strong. Nothing suppresses our courage more, nothing draws our spirit more violently from prayer and meditation, nothing cripples our longing for heavenly things, more than the inordinate desire after sensual pleasures. He that is controlled by the impulses of his sensual nature, is in danger of exchanging his eternal salvation for a momentary pleasure. Since by fasting sensuality is weakened and mortified, it is the source of spiritual power and of a more heavenly life.

(b.) All pious, holy souls were convinced of this; therefore, they fasted zealously and rigorously. St. John the Baptist fasted austerely during his whole life; the Scripture says that his food consisted of locusts and wild honey.—*Matt.* 3: 4. Anna, a widow, until four-score and four years served God in fasting and prayer day and night.—*Luke* 2: 37. St. Anthony the hermit frequently fasted for three days and

nights, and on the fourth day ate only a piece of bread. At the time of St. Augustine there were many Christians who fasted most rigorously; not only strong men, but weak youths, tender virgins, and aged persons frequently abstained from all food for the space of three days and nights. In short, we can not find a saint in the whole calendar of the Church who was not given to this species of mortification.

#### PERORATION.

Fast at least in so far as the Church obliges you, for fasting is useful. St. Bernard says: "Fasting is not only a cleansing from sin, but also an expiation of it; it not only obtains pardon for us, but also merits grace, it not only blots out past sins, but also prevents future ones." Unite your corporal fast with a spiritual fast. Subdue your passions, avoid sin. During the holy season of Lent you must give up enmities, restore ill-gotten goods, dissolve all sinful connections and familiarities, and avoid the proximate occasion of sin, that your fasting may be holy and acceptable to God and profitable to yourselves, and may draw down upon you God's favor and blessing. Amen.

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#### FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

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## 7. MORAL SKETCH.

#### WHY WE MUST FAST.

*"Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation."*—  
II. Cor. 6: 2.

With the holy season of Lent, which we commenced last Wednesday, it is the same as with the harvest time, laborers who are indolent find no pleasure in it, because it requires a great deal of labor and the surmounting of many difficulties. Those, on the contrary, who love to labor, are glad that harvest time is coming around, for they know that the rich blessings of the harvest are worth a few days' exertion and trouble. In like manner the holy time of fasting is a sad time for worldly-minded people, because in it all worldly amusements are forbidden and exercises of mortification are prescribed; but to him who is penetrated by a true spiritual fervor, the time of Lent is desirable, for he considers it as a spiritual harvest, in which he can reap rich food for his soul.



Let us not be careless, but zealous Christians, and cheerfully submit to the sacrifice which Lent demands of us, that it may become for us an acceptable time and a day of salvation; let us conscientiously keep the ecclesiastical precept of fasting, because fasting is, as we shall consider to-day—

*I. Acceptable to God, and*

*II. Profitable to ourselves.*

#### PART I.

That fasting is acceptable to God he has frequently revealed in the Old and New Testament.

##### 1. In the Old Law.

(a.) We know that God forbade our first parents in Paradise, under the penalty of death, to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.—

*Gen. 2: 17.* Thus, you see, the precept to abstain, to fast, is of very ancient date, for it was the first precept given by God to man; and the first good work that man should have done was to consist in fasting. From this it naturally follows that fasting pleases God; but it displeases the devil, else he would not have seduced our first parents and persuaded them to transgress the precept of fasting. We ought to consider this, and fast strictly, in order to please God and displease the devil.

(b.) In the Old Law we find two very renowned men whom God glorified by the greatest miracles, Moses and Elias. Both fasted, and by their forty days' fast became even types of Christ. Moses fasted forty days on Mount Sinai, and received from the hands of God the two tables of the holy law.—*Exodus 31: 18.* Elias also fasted forty days till he came to Mount Horeb, where God revealed himself to him.—*III. Kings 19.* That Moses and Elias were particular friends of God is evident from the fact that they were on Mount Thabor at the transfiguration of our Lord.

(c.) To the pious women who are eminent among all of their sex in the Old Law, belong Esther and Judith; both received great graces from God through their fasts. The prudent Esther by fasting frustrated the designs of the proud Aman and saved her people from destruction.—*Esth. 4: 16.* By fasting the brave Judith conquered Holofernes and saved her city, Bethulia.—*Jud. 8: 6.*

(d.) The Prophet Jonas, by the orders of God, had already announced to the city of Nineveh its destruction. What saved that city? Fasting.

Neither king, nor people, nor beasts took either food or drink; all from the highest to the lowest did penance, and God spared their city.—*Jon.* 3.

(c.) The Israelites had often grievously sinned, wherefore God punished them severely; but as often as they did penance and fasted, they found grace and pardon. When, in the days of Eli, they had suffered many defeats, and upon the advice of Samuel the Prophet they had recourse to fasting, they were converted from their idolatry, and God showed them mercy and delivered them from the hands of their enemies.—*Judges* 7.

## 2. *In the New Law.*

(a.) At the beginning of the New Law we first meet with St. John the Baptist, of whom an angel said to Zachary before he was conceived in his mother's womb, that he should drink no wine nor strong drink.—*Luke* 1: 15. In fact, the whole life of this greatest of all prophets was a continual fast. "John had his garment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, and his food was locusts and wild honey."—*Matt.* 3: 4.

(b.) Jesus Christ himself gives us the example by his fasting, for, as the Gospel tells us, he fasted in the desert forty days and forty nights so austere that during this long space of time he abstained entirely from food and drink. After these things, who can doubt that fasting is a work pleasing to God?

(c.) Jesus foretold that his followers should fast: "The days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they shall fast."—*Matt.* 9: 15. As Jesus Christ, the bridegroom of the Church, is taken away from us, it follows that all good Christians and followers of Christ must fast. The Apostles and early Christians observed the forty days' fast. They would have been ashamed to call themselves Christians if they had not imitated Christ in fasting. Read the Lives of the Saints, and I assure you, you shall not find a single Saint who did not fast. And how austere did the primitive Christians fast! They ate during the forty days but one meal daily, and that in the evening. The meals were poor, for they abstained, not only from meat and milk, but also from other costly dishes. They never drank wine. St. Cyril says: We fast by abstaining from meat and wine. They considered that fasting consists not only in enduring hunger, but also thirst, for at their meals they not only drank no wine, but they even abstained from water. No one exempted himself from fasting; all, young and old alike, even those who worked hard, fasted. During

Holy Week, as Epiphanius tells us, they used nothing but bread, water, and salt. What a rigorous fast! And shall we not perform this work, which is so pleasing to God?

## PART II.

The Church in yesterday's mass prayed: "Receive, O Lord, our humble supplication, and grant that we may celebrate with true devotion this holy fast which has been instituted for the benefit of our souls and bodies."

By this prayer of the Church we are taught that fasting is salutary, both for *our soul and body*.

### 1. *For our soul.*

(a.) Fasting has the virtue of cleansing from sin. The Jews believed so, and therefore their days of penance were also fast days. "Every soul that is not afflicted on the great day of propitiation, shall perish from among his people."—*Lev. 23: 29*. Among Christians also fasting was considered a means for obtaining of God the forgiveness of sin. Hence St. Basil says: "Fast, because you have sinned. By fasting you shall blot out the sins which you have committed against God." This, however, is not to be understood as if fasting effected immediately the forgiveness of sin, as the Sacrament of Penance does. Fasting has not this virtue, but if we fast with a contrite heart, we may confidently hope that God will give us special graces for making a good confession and obtaining the forgiveness of all our sins. By penitential fasting, as well as by other works of penance, we can blot out venial sins.

(b.) *Fasting expiates the temporal punishments due to sin.* First, it averts those temporal punishments which God generally inflicts upon men in this world for their sins. Thus God withdrew the punishments which he was about to inflict upon the Ninevites, because they fasted and did penance in sackcloth and ashes.—*Jon. 3*. In like manner God withdrew the chastisements, which by his Prophet Elias he had announced to Achab, because this king, filled with contrition, fasted.—*III. Kings 21*. Fasting particularly expiates those punishments of sin which would have to be satisfied for in purgatory, after the sins as to their guilt and the eternal punishments are forgiven. This was the doctrine of the Church from the beginning; it is for this reason that she always imposed upon Christians fasting as a penitential work.

(c.) *Fasting prevents sin.* Jesus once cast out a devil whom his disciples after much labor could not expel. To the question why they could not cast him out, Jesus replied: "This kind (of evil spirits) is not cast out except by prayer and fasting."—*Matt. 17: 20*. For the casting

out of devils, besides prayer, fasting is necessary; but since sins are works of the devil (*I. John* 3: 8), we must not only pray, but also fast, in order to guard ourselves against them. "Our flesh," says St. Augustine, "is our draught-horse; generally the flesh draws, and compels us to follow and deviate from the right road; this animal we bridle by depriving it of fodder, and we tame it by hunger."

(d.) Finally, fasting elevates the soul to God. The more we yield to sensual enjoyments, the more imperious the flesh becomes and the weaker the spirit. By fasting, the soul weighted down by the flesh before, is lightened, freed. It becomes possible for it to bound upwards to God. Hence Moses, Daniel, John the Baptist, the Apostles, and all the Saints of the Old and the New Law fasted, in order to raise themselves to spiritual things and unite themselves with God. The Church testifies to this effect of fasting in her prayers, and especially in the preface during Lent, where we read: Thou who by a corporal fast dost repress the vicious inclinations, elevate the spirit, grant virtue and reward. St. Ambrose says: "Fasting is the life of angels, it is a ladder on which we ascend to God."

## 2. For our body. Proofs:

(a.) *The Sacred Scripture.* "Be not greedy in any feasting, and pour not out thyself upon any meat; for in many meats there will be sickness, and greediness will turn to choler. By surfeiting many have perished, but he that is temperate, shall prolong life."—*Eccles.* 37: 32–34. Daniel and his companions at Babylon ate only vegetables and pulse, and drank nothing but water, and yet "their faces appeared fairer and fatter than all the children that ate of the king's meat."—*Dan.* 1: 8–15.

(b.) *Physicians.* The renowned physician Hippocrates reached an old age. Being asked the reason, he answered: I never rose from the table satiated. Another, a Christian physician, says: I am practicing medicine for the last sixty years, and during this long period I have sought in vain three persons in the world: viz., a tradesman who knows his trade well, works industriously, and yet can not get along; a Christian who loves to hear sermons, and yet does not improve; and a man that is abstemious, and yet dies prematurely. As the industrious tradesman never will suffer want, nor the diligent hearer of the word of God become impious, so the temperate man can not easily die prematurely. Temperance in eating and drinking prevents all diseases which come from a disordered stomach, it moderates and lessens all other bodily evils, quiets the passions, preserves hilarity of spirit, and is therefore the best means for the preservation of health and the prolongation of life.

(c.) *History and experience.* Who ever fasted more severely than the fathers in the desert, the hermits? They often ate nothing but roots and herbs, drank nothing but water, and yet reached an old age. St. Anthony lived 105, St. Pachomius 110, and St. Romuald 120 years. It is feasting, not fasting, that brings on sickness. No one ever knew a person that became sick and died by fasting, but that many by intemperance in eating and drinking become sick and sink into an early grave, is known to all. St. Jerome therefore is right in saying: "Fasting is the mother of health, but intemperance is the mother of sickness."

#### PERORATION.

Strictly observe the ecclesiastical precept of fasting during this holy season, for it is acceptable to God and profitable to you. But be not satisfied with merely abstaining from flesh meat on the days appointed, and in depriving yourselves of the usual quantity of meat and drink, but unite the spiritual fast with the corporal; carefully avoid sin, mortify your inordinate inclinations, bridle your senses, the ears, eyes, and tongue; live as much as possible a retired life, and occupy yourselves with God and the concerns of your soul. This is the way to make your fast truly holy and salutary, and one that will merit the grace of God and life everlasting. Amen.

## SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

**EPISTLE. 1. Thess. 4: 1-7.** Brethren: We pray and beseech you in the Lord Jesus, that as you have received from us, how you ought to walk, and to please God, so also you would walk, that you may abound the more. For you know what commandments I have given to you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from fornication. That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles who know not God. and that no man overreach, nor deceive his brother in business: because the Lord is the avenger of all such things, as we have told you before, and have testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto sanctification in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## 1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

### WHY WE MUST SHUN THE VICE OF IMPURITY.

What St. Paul had impressed upon the minds of the Thessalonians orally, he also inculcated upon them eloquently and emphatically in

writing—namely, that they should regulate their conduct according to the holy will of God, and strive to become more and more perfect. For, as the Apostle adds, this is the will of God, your sanctification. God said to the Israelites: “Be ye holy, because I the Lord your God am holy.”—*Lev.* 19: 2. And what else did Jesus inculcate upon us by his word and example than that we should continually strive for our sanctification? “Be you perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect.”—*Matt.* 5: 48. This was the aim of all his instructions and exhortations. We need not wonder that St. Paul and the other Apostles by word of mouth and by letter exhort us to the sanctification of our lives. But nothing is more opposed to our sanctification than impurity, and for this reason St. Paul, in the epistle of this day, warns us against that vice and gives the reasons *why we must shun it*. What, then, are the reasons?

I. The Apostle gives as the first reason for the shunning of impurity, the *will of God*. “*This is the will of God, your sanctification; that you should abstain from fornication.*”

(a.) The ancient Pagans were so blinded that they considered the basest offenses against purity no sin, nay, they represented their gods to themselves as living in impurity and pleased with obscenity. This was the reason why they made the vice of impurity a part of their religious service, so that in their religious meetings they allowed themselves the most abominable debaucheries, imagining that their gods were pleased with these things. What horrid blindness! The Christians of Thessalonica had been but lately converted, and lived among Pagans, who yielded without shame to carnal lusts. St. Paul therefore considered it necessary to instruct them by letter, assuring them, as he had already done orally, that the infinitely holy God is grievously offended by everything unchaste, and that he requires of us all to live chastely. “This is the will of God, that you should abstain from fornication.”

(b.) This instruction and admonition deserves our most serious consideration. There was hardly ever a time, as long as Christianity is in existence, in which the vice of impurity was so prevalent as it is at present. All are corroded with this vice, young and old, rich and poor, town and country. Many no longer regard this abominable vice as wrong and sinful; they excuse it as a human frailty, nay, they endeavor to represent it as a natural necessity, which can be as little forbidden as eating or drinking. Poets and romancers so adorn this damnable vice, and by their genius throw around it such a glow and glitter, while cunningly concealing its beastliness, that the young and incautious are led to look upon the blackest crimes against God’s law,

crimes also against the laws of human society, not only without a shudder, but with a great measure of indulgence. And what is said of poets and novelists may be averred even with still more reason of most of our theatres. And young men and maidens read such books and frequent theatres, and do so, not with the connivance only, but with the full knowledge and approval of their parents! How great, then, is the danger of seduction! Since every one by nature inclines to impurity, and frequently is sorely tempted, how easy is it for one in the midst of a blinded and corrupt world to be infected. Therefore, never forget the word of the Apostle: "It is the will of God that you should abstain from fornication." Though you be tempted interiorly and exteriorly, think of God, in whose eyes every kind of impurity is an abomination, and say within yourselves, with Joseph of Egypt: "How can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God?"—*Gen.* 39: 9.

2. A second motive for the preservation of chastity is, that impurity desecrates the body of man and robs him of his honor and good name. "*It is the will of God that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor, and not in the passion of lust.*"

The vessel of which the Apostle here speaks is our body; in it the soul is like a jewel in a casket. Our body is venerable, for, like the soul, it is created by God, redeemed by Christ, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and is destined to rise again glorious and immortal, and, united with the soul, to enjoy everlasting felicity in heaven. Should we not keep this body in honor? Who would dare to abuse his own body, or that of his neighbor, to base things? Not only our soul, but also our body, is a temple of God, as the Apostle says: "Know you not that you (both body and soul) are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?"—*I. Cor.* 3: 16. If any one should commit a sin of impurity in a church, in which Jesus Christ is really present in the Blessed Eucharist, what a sin! Such a church would be desecrated, and no mass could be said in it until it should again be blessed and consecrated. What an abominable sin, then, is impurity, by which the body, this temple of God, is desecrated! Need we wonder if the Apostle adds: "But if any one violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, which you are."—*I. Cor.* 3: 16. The Apostle goes still farther, and says: "Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ?"—*I. Cor.* 6: 15. The bodies of Christians are not something separated from Christ, they are most intimately united with him by baptism, but more particularly by holy communion; they are, as it were, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. Can we with anything but horror read what the Apostle writes: "Shall I then, taking the members of Christ, make them the members of a harlot? God forbid."—*I. Cor.* 6: 15.

(b.) It is the vice of impurity that robs man of honor and his good name. Though the world excuse this vice and try to pass it off as a harmless pleasure, it remains true that every man, even the sinner, despises the impure in his heart. What do people generally think of a lewd female? what of the debauchee? Everybody despises them; for we read: "Every woman that is a harlot, shall be trodden upon as dung in the way."—*Eccles.* 9: 10. Amnon so despised Thamar, after she had yielded to his impure love, that he commanded his servant "to put her out and shut the door after her."—*II. Kings* 13. Jehu commanded Jezebel, who, to make an impression and to please, had painted her face and adorned herself, to be thrown out of the window headlong.—*IV. Kings* 9. No wonder the unchaste reap shame and mockery, since, when they themselves think of their crimes, they blush and feel abashed.

3. And another reason why Christians should shun impurity, is *that they know God and his holy law far better than the Gentiles*. You should not burn "*in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles that know not God.*" If the Gentiles yield themselves to impurity, they have at least *some* excuse, because they are in ignorance as to the baseness and culpability of this vice. But this is not the case with us, for we know by the word of God that whatever violates the chastity of our state of life is strictly forbidden. We know that we sin grievously even in thoughts and desires against chastity, if we entertain them voluntarily, take pleasure in them, and consent to them. We know that unchaste glances, words, touches, and actions, if they are voluntary, exclude us from heaven and draw eternal damnation after them. "I say unto you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart."—*Matt.* 5: 28. "Fornication and all uncleanness, let it not so much as be named among you, as it cometh saints."—*Ephes.* 5: 3. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are, fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, and luxury, . . . they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God."—*Gal.* 5: 19. We know the precepts and ordinances of our holy religion, which enjoins on us the duty of leading a mortified life and of manfully renouncing everything that entices to sin, especially to the sin of impurity; we also believe that God, the infinitely pure and holy God, inclines with special love to chaste souls, and that he calls them blessed.

What follows from this? Without doubt, that we are more strictly obliged to chastity than were the Gentiles, and that if we do not live chastely, a worse lot awaits us than shall befall them. The words of Jesus apply to us: "I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, in the day of judgment, than for you."—*Matt.* 11: 22.



4. As a last motive for avoiding impurity the Apostle gives the *punishment that awaits the unchaste*. "*The Lord is the avenger of all these things, as we have told you before, and have testified.*"

(a.) *God punishes the unchaste even here below.* Examples: In the days of Noah, the deluge came upon the earth and drowned the whole human race, with the exception of eight persons. Why? Because of the vice of impurity, for we read: "All flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth."—*Gen.* 6: 12. It was on account of impurity that God rained fire and brimstone upon the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, so that all perished, excepting Lot and his family. When the Israelites lived in Settim and committed impurities with the Moabites, the Lord became angry, and twenty-four thousand men were slain.—*Num.* 95: 9. "He that joineth himself to harlots, will be wicked. Rottenness and worms shall inherit him, and he shall be lifted up for a greater example; and his soul shall be taken away out of the number."—*Eccles.* 19: 3. Do not history and experience attest the truth of this divine sentence? A renowned physician (Tissot) says: "No contagious sickness destroys so much the natural powers of the body, debilitates the youth, and brings on so general a decay of understanding and memory, and shortens life, as libidinous love." "The adulterer," says St. Chrysostom, "though he be accused by no one, never ceases interiorly to accuse himself. The lust lasts but a short time, but the pain of remorse remains, with fear and trembling, suspicion and anguish. He lives like Cain, trembling and moaning upon earth; and without anybody seeing it, he carries fire in his heart."

5. *And in the other world eternal damnation awaits the unchaste, unless they do true penance.* "Know, and be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate shall possess the kingdom of God."—*I. Cor.* 6: 9, 10. "To the fornicators, their portion shall be in the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."—*Apoc.* 21: 8. Who will count all those unfortunates who shall be condemned on account of impurity? And how will those damned souls rage against themselves, how will they curse themselves and their accomplices, when they consider that they have plunged themselves into eternal damnation on account of abominable and momentary lusts, which even here on earth caused them so much bitterness and woe.

#### PERORATION.

These are the motives why we should avoid impurity. Consider them well, and shun every shadow of sin against the holy virtue of purity as you would persons infected with a plague. Take advice, Christian sons

and daughters. You are most exposed to the dangers of impurity, you live in a world that is full of snares; the vivacity of your age, your want of experience and prudence, render it easy to the seducers to poison your heart and to rob you of your innocence. Walk, therefore, cautiously on the slippery ways of this life, have God before your eyes and pray, that you lose not a treasure, which, with an ocean of tears, you can never recover. And you, Christian parents, if you have the temporal and spiritual welfare of your children at heart, and wish to be able to stand before the judgment-seat of God, watch over them and do all you can to protect them from seduction and ruin. Let us all strive for purity and sanctity, and never forget the word of the Lord: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."—*Matt. 5: 8.* Amen.

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## SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

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GOSPEL. *St. Matt. 17: 1-9.* At that time: Jesus taketh unto him Peter and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart. And he was transfigured before them. And his face did shine as the sun: and his garments became white as snow. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elias talking with him. And Peter answering, said to Jesus: Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. And as he was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them. And behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him. And the disciples hearing, fell upon their face, and were very much afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said to them: Arise, and be not afraid. And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, but only Jesus. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying: Tell the vision to no man, till the Son of Man be risen from the dead.

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## 2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

### THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST.

Our Saviour upon one occasion said to his disciples: "Amen, I say to you, there are some of them standing here, who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man in his kingdom."—*Matt. 16: 28.* Several holy Fathers, such as Saints Jerome, Chrysostom, and Ambrose, understand by this "*coming of Christ in his kingdom*" his transfiguration on Mount Tabor, which event occurred six days afterwards. Many Fathers of the Church interpret these six days as the six ages,

each of which comprises a thousand years. They are of the opinion that the world shall last six thousand years, and that then the last judgment, and the glorification of Jesus before heaven and earth, shall follow. According to this opinion, we would be living now in the last age, and the day of the last judgment would be in no very distant future, only a little more than a hundred years. Whether this will be really so or not, we do not know with certainty, because we have no particular revelation on the subject; however, it will be good for us to watch, "because we know not at what hour the Lord will come."—*Matt. 24: 42.*

Let us to-day meditate on the transfiguration of Jesus, and consider what occurred—

- I. Before it;*
- II. At it;*
- III. After it.*

#### PART I.

What occurred before the transfiguration of Christ the Gospel tells us in a few words: "Jesus took unto him Peter and James, and John his brother, and brought them up into a high mountain apart."

1. Jesus had twelve Apostles and seventy-two disciples, but of all these he chose only three, viz., Peter, James, and John, and brought them with him up into a high mountain.

*(a.) Why did Christ not take all his Apostles and disciples with him, but only three?*

First. Because Jesus wished his transfiguration to be kept secret yet. He would not have attained his object so surely if he had made all his Apostles and disciples witnesses of it. This ought to be a lesson to us to keep the secrets which have been confided to us, and not to be curious and inquisitive after things which we need not know. He that cares not about things that do not concern him, lives the most quiet life.

Second. Because the presence at the transfiguration belonged to the extraordinary graces which God, according to his wisdom, is not accustomed to grant to all, but only to a chosen few. Such graces are not necessary to every man for salvation; for this reason God imparts them only to a few, to whom, for certain reasons and on account of particular circumstances, they are necessary or salutary. From this the important lesson follows, that we must not become discontented or lose courage when God showers on others his goods and graces more abun-

dantly than on us; let us humble ourselves before him and employ well the graces which we receive of his goodness; then we shall attain our salvation, as well as the more favored souls.

(b.) *Why did Christ take with him Peter, James, and John?* According to the interpretation of the Fathers, he did this for two reasons:

First. Because these three Apostles stood in need of particular strength in the faith Peter, as the head of the Church and vicar of Christ upon earth; James, as the first martyr among the Apostles; John, who by his Gospel should defend the divinity of Christ against the false teachers of the first and following centuries. The faith of these Apostles was especially strengthened at the transfiguration of Christ, because they beheld him in heavenly glory, and heard Moses and Elias, and the heavenly Father himself, giving testimony to him.

Second. As a reward of the virtues by which these Apostles distinguished themselves: Peter, by his constancy and zeal; James, by his love of prayer and austerity of life; John, by his virginal purity, and by intimate love for Jesus. Here we see the ways on which we can come to God and obtain great graces—namely, 1st, the faith which is ready for Jesus and his holy doctrine to go into martyrdom and death; 2d, mortification and prayer; and, 3d, chastity of one's state and love for Jesus.

2. *Christ took the three Apostles, and brought them into a high mountain apart.* The Sacred Scripture does not mention what mountain it was, but according to most of the interpreters, it was Thabor, a celebrated mountain in Galilee, two miles distant from Nazareth. It is at the base nine miles, and at the top three miles in circumference, and it takes two hours to reach its summit. The going-up of Jesus and the three Apostles to the mountain is instructive.

(a.) The mountain signifies, first of all, *Christian perfection*, to which every Christian is bound to aspire, according to the word of Jesus: 'Be you perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect.'—*Matt.* 5: 48. It is a duty for us to become daily more perfect; that is, to quit our faults more and more, and to make progress in virtue. How do matters stand with us? Do we aspire to perfection? Ah! how many are there not among us who, instead of going forward, go backward, and must acknowledge: Five or ten years ago I was better than I am now.

(b.) The mountain signifies also *heaven*, to which we are all called. Christ wishes to have us all with him in heaven, therefore he says him-

self: "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I shall go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will take you to myself, that where I am you also may be."—*John* 14: 2, 3. Oh, what joy, what consolation for us, that we can say: I am called to heaven! Let us never lose sight of our vocation.

(c.) As every high mountain, so also Thabor is difficult to climb; it costs sweat and exertion to reach the summit. It also costs labor to arrive at Christian perfection and heaven. Christ himself says: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away."—*Matt.* 11: 12. And why? First, because by nature we are inclined to sin, and our inborn concupiscence makes the exercise of every virtue difficult; secondly, because the world by its scandals, illusions, and persecutions endeavors to deter us from the service of God; and thirdly, because the devil everywhere lays snares to draw us into sin. But all this must not discourage us, for "we can do all things in him who strengtheneth us."—*Phil.* 4: 13.

## PART II.

At the transfiguration of Jesus upon Mount Thabor, we must consider—

1. *The change of the form of Jesus.* The Gospel says: "He was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as snow." This transfiguration was an effect of the gift of lucidity, which, as the other gifts of a glorified body, was proper to the body of Christ and to his soul united to his divinity from the first moment of his Incarnation. In order to be able to converse with men and to instruct them, as well as to suffer and die for them, he concealed under the veil of his pure humanity the transcendent lucidity upon which now, for the first time, the Apostles gazed in ecstasy and awe. Here upon Mount Thabor he interrupted this miracle of his veiled divine nature, so that his transfiguration must not be looked upon as a miracle, but rather as the cessation or interruption of a continual thirty-three years' miracle. To what an extent does the humility and love of Jesus go in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar, in which he hides both his divinity and humanity, and appears under the species of bread!

2. *The apparition of Moses and Elias.* "And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him." These two most renowned men of the Old Testament, the lawgiver Moses and the Prophet Elias, appeared to testify that Jesus Christ was he who, in the Law and the writings of the prophets, had been foretold and promised as the Redeemer of the world, and that the Law and the prophecies,

through him, had reached their end and ceased, and gave place to the New Law with its promises and graces. These two Saints distinguished themselves by their zeal for God and his holy law; for this reason Jesus wished to honor them especially, and to make them witnesses of this transfiguration. Let us also be zealous for the law of God, and promote his honor by word and example. As St. Luke remarks, Moses and Elias spoke with him of his death, which was to take place in Jerusalem (9: 31); that is, of his Passion and death. The Apostles were to learn by this, that his Passion and death were nothing accidental, but willed by God—something which he had already foretold to men in the Old Law. Consequently, the Apostles, when the time for the Passion and death really should come, ought not to stagger in their faith, but be confirmed in it. The circumstance that Moses and Elias speak with Jesus on his Passion and death, in the midst of the joys of his transfiguration, may serve as a salutary lesson for us, that in the tribulations of life we should preserve a cheerful countenance, mindful of the words of the Apostles, “that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us.”—*Rom. 8: 18.*

3. *The rapture of Peter:* “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.”

(a.) At the sight of the transfigured Saviour, Peter becomes entirely beside himself; he is so enraptured that he scarcely knows what he says; he forgets his vocation and every earthly thing; his only wish and desire is to remain upon the mountain, and to enjoy the felicity of the vision of the transfigured Redeemer. If the sight of the transfigured humanity of Christ makes Peter so beside himself and intoxicates him with delight, what will the vision of God and the full enjoyment of the eternal celestial joys do? We should frequently—nay, daily—call to mind this unspeakable beatitude which awaits us in heaven; for this remembrance will urge us to zeal for virtue, and to the patient bearing of all sufferings. Example: The Machabean brothers and their mother.—*II. Mach. 7.* “The present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.”—*II. Cor. 4: 17.*

(b.) Peter wished to build three tabernacles, and always to remain upon the mountain. Herein he deserved rebuke, if the circumstance that he was beside himself did not excuse him. How much more do we deserve rebuke when we wish only for enjoyment, and endeavor to keep everything arduous away from us as much as possible, even to the violation of our duties, and nevertheless expect to earn heaven!

But that will never do. He who wishes to rejoice with Christ in heaven, must carry the cross with him upon earth. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."—*Matt. 16: 24*. Let us not regard this world as a lasting city, a resting-place, but as a place of warfare, a workshop, in which we must work, fight, and suffer, if we wish to enter into eternal rest.

4. *The voice out of the cloud.* Whilst Peter was beside himself with joy and wished to remain upon the mountain, it happened that a cloud overshadowed Jesus, Moses, and Elias, so that Peter and the other Apostles could see nothing more of the whole apparition, but they heard a voice out of the cloud saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

(a.) Here God, the heavenly Father himself, declares that Jesus is his Son, of the same essence, begotten by him from eternity, like him all-wise and omnipotent; in fine, true God. Hold firm to this fundamental truth of our holy faith, in opposition to so many unbelievers and free-thinkers, who absolutely deny the divinity of Jesus, and only regard him as the wise man of Nazareth.

(b.) God the Father in heaven enjoins it as a duty on us, to hear Jesus, that is, to believe what he teaches and to do what he commands. But we hear Christ when we hear the Holy Catholic Church, for Christ speaks through the mouth of the Church; what she teaches, is the infallible word of God, wherefore he says: "He that heareth you, heareth me."—*Luke 10: 16*. Ah, how many Christians are there now-a-days who do not hear Christ and his Church, who neither believe nor do what the Church teaches or prescribes; but, "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican."—*Matt. 18: 17*.

5. *The fear of the Apostles.* "The disciples hearing, fell upon their face, and were very much afraid." The Apostles, on account of the wonderful apparition, and especially of the voice of God, which they heard out of the cloud, were seized with so great a fear that they fell upon their face. If the gentle and affectionate voice of God put such terror into the Apostles, what dismay shall overwhelm the reprobate when, on the general judgment day, they shall hear from the divine Judge the sentence of their condemnation? "Three things I fear," the Abbot Elias used to say, "the first, when my soul shall depart from my body; the second, when I must appear before God, my Judge; and the third, when my sentence shall be passed upon me." Let us frequently think well on these three things, and live in such a manner that they, when they come, may be to us, not an object of terror, but of consolation and hope.

## PART III.

After the transfiguration we have yet to consider—

1. *The calming of the Apostles.* *Christ came and touched them, and said to them, "Arise, and fear not."* The Apostles were seized with great terror on account of the heavenly apparition and of what they heard; Jesus approached, touched, and calmed them. If, on account of impending sufferings, or evils that happen, fear befall us, it is something human; but if Jesus comes to us with his grace, we have no reason to fear. If, therefore, our avocation or station in life enjoin on us something arduous as a duty, let us not be afraid, for in this case Jesus is with us. With his assistance we shall safely and prosperously accomplish that which seems to surpass our strength, if we only go at it with humility and confidence. Neither must we be afraid when we have to withstand long and violent temptations; let us put our trust in Christ, and fight with courage and perseverance, and victory will perch on our banner. "If armies in camp shall stand together against me, my heart shall not fear."—*Psalm 26: 3.*

2. *The circumstance of Christ being alone.* "*They, lifting up their eyes, saw no man, but only Jesus.*" The voice from heaven, the bright cloud, Moses and Elias, the shining face of Christ, and the splendor of his garments—all had disappeared; our dear Lord alone in his usual form remained. Learn from this, that in good and evil days, in gladness and sadness, you must turn your eyes to Jesus alone. If you are made partakers of some good, even spiritual, if everything go well with you, if you enjoy interior consolations, consider nothing of all this as your last end, turn your look to Christ alone, cling to him and love him with your whole heart. If tribulation of whatever kind befall you, if the whole world turn its back upon you, if even Moses and Elias, your friends, depart from you, still, if you have Jesus, you have enough, and more than enough, for Christ is a superabundant compensation for every loss.

3. *The charge of Christ to keep the apparition secret.* "*And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying: Tell the vision to no man, till the Son of Man be risen from the dead.*"

(a.) In giving this charge to the Apostles Christ directly and plainly intimated that they should not glory in the grace of which they were made partakers. Graces received are best preserved when we observe an humble silence regarding them. He who without necessity reveals them and boasts of them, betrays pride; but God withdraws his grace from the proud. It is also very wrong for us to glory in what is not



our own; but we have nothing that is good, for from ourselves we have nothing but misery and sin. And if we possessed the merits of a St. Paul, we should be obliged to confess with him: "By the grace of God I am what I am."—*I. Cor. 15: 10.* Let us keep an humble heart, and employ with fervor the graces which God imparts to us for our sanctification, that we may be able to say with the Apostle: "And his grace in me hath not been void."—*I. Cor. 15: 10.*

## PERORATION.

In conclusion, I would exhort you to make that ineffable felicity which the Saints in heaven enjoy the frequent subject of your meditation. If the world entice you to sensual and sinful joys, reflect: How foolish I should be, if on account of mean and fleeting joys I should hazard the everlasting glories of heaven. If you are obliged to endure tribulations, comfort yourselves with the thought: Heaven is worth suffering something for. Keep a good conscience, be fervent in prayer, persevere in virtue, and follow Christ courageously and constantly on the way of the cross, that you may also follow him into the kingdom of his glory. Amen.

## SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

## 3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

## THE EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

*"Jesus was transfigured before them."—Matt. 17: 2.*

Our Blessed Lord with three of his disciples ascends a high mountain, and is transfigured before them. His face shines as the sun, and his garments become white as snow. Peter, beside himself in ecstasy can only exclaim: "Lord, it is good for us to be here." If this Apostle, who beheld only a few rays of the heavenly light streaming from Jesus, full of transport, becomes beside himself, what felicity must it be to behold the whole glory of God, and to possess eternally him who is the author of all that is beautiful and good! Truly, this felicity will be unfathomable, wherefore St. Paul says: "The eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him."—*I. Cor. 2: 9.*

That we may be made partakers of this unspeakable happiness, a transfiguration, in a spiritual sense, must take place in us: our soul

must be cleansed from all stains of sin and be adorned with sanctifying grace, that she may become beautiful and glorious before God, to have him take pleasure in her. This transfiguration of our soul is accomplished especially in the holy Sacrament of Penance, which all shall receive in the coming Easter time, according to the precept of the Church. On the requirements for a worthy reception of this Sacrament I shall speak to you to-day and on the following Sundays of Lent. To-day I intend to treat of the examination of conscience, and answer the following three questions:

- I. By what must we begin the examination of conscience?*
- II. In what manner should we examine our conscience?*
- III. Against what faults must we guard in the examination of conscience.*

#### PART I.

We must begin the examination of conscience by imploring the assistance of the Holy Ghost, that he may give us the grace rightly to know, to repent of, and to confess our sins. The assistance of the Holy Ghost is necessary—

1. *That we may rightly know our sins.* If light is wanting to us, our eyes are of little help, we see nothing with them; only when the light of the sun or some other light shines upon them, can the objects around us become visible. The same is the case with the understanding; we can see our sins in their proper form only when a supernatural light is cast upon them. This light proceeds from the Holy Ghost. He must enlighten our interior, ere we can see what is amiss and sinful in us, ere we can see it at least in such sort as to be able to make an entire and good confession.

2. *That we may truly and supernaturally repent of our sins, and make a firm purpose not to sin any more.* With our natural faculties we are incapable of doing or thinking anything meritorious for eternal life; we therefore can neither be sorry for our sins in a supernatural manner nor make a good resolution of amendment based upon supernatural motives. Only the Holy Ghost can enable us to do this, who, according to the Prophet Ezechiel (36: 26), can "take away the stony heart out of our flesh and give us a heart of flesh;" only he can excite, soften, and move us to true repentance, and give us courage and strength to make a firm resolution not to offend our God any more.

3. *That we may sincerely confess our sins.* We must sincerely confess all our sins, be they ever so base and shameful. This demands humiliation and self-denial which surpass the powers of mere and unaided

human nature. If the Holy Ghost would not govern our tongues and thoughts, and encourage us to a sincere avowal of our sins, we should conceal the very things that should the least be concealed, and leave the confessional greater sinners than we came into it.

4. *That we may be excited to a true spirit of penance.* We must have the earnest will to make satisfaction to the divine justice for our sins. For this end we must repent again and again of our sins as long as we live, humble ourselves before God, perform various penitential works, and particularly accept in our persons with patience all the tribulations of life. For this also we need the grace of the Holy Ghost, "for it is God who worketh in us both to will and to accomplish."—*Phil. 2: 13.*

From all this you must perceive that the imploring of the Holy Ghost is not a thing of indifference when preparing for confession, but a matter of the very highest importance, nay, of necessity. He who omits it from levity, exposes himself to the danger of making a bad confession. Although the Holy Ghost gives us the first grace without our coöperation, he will not give us the further graces which are necessary for the worthy reception of the Sacrament of Penance, unless we petition for them; wherefore Christ himself says: "Your Father from heaven will give the good spirit to them that ask him."—*Luke 11: 13.* Always begin the important business of confession by a devout prayer, and implore the assistance of the Holy Ghost, in the following manner: "Come, O Holy Ghost, enlighten my understanding, that I may rightly know my sins, and move my heart, that I may properly repent of them, sincerely confess them, and truly amend my life."

## PART II.

In what manner should we examine our conscience? We should examine—

(a.) *When it was that we last made a good confession, and whether we performed the penance then laid upon us.* We must always tell "when we made our last confession," because the confessor from the date can form an approximatively correct judgment of the state of the soul of the sinner.

(b.) *But we must examine ourselves particularly when it was that we last made a good confession, and how, in general, matters stand with our past confessions.* If we have good reason to fear that any of our past confessions were bad, that is the first thing to be attended to. Should we neglect doing so, our present confession would be bad also. Many confess invalidly because they do not examine themselves on their

former confessions, and do not care whether they were valid or not. All those who have never made a general confession, or who always relapse into their former sins, and live in carelessness, I would implore at their Easter confession to ask themselves: How is it with my past confessions? Was true contrition and a firm purpose of amendment wanting to me in any of those confessions? Did I not conceal something that I should have confessed? Did I perform the penance given me by the priest?

2. *We should examine ourselves on the commandments of God, the precepts of the Church, and the obligations of our state of life, and carefully ascertain in what way and how often we have offended God by thoughts, words, actions, and omissions, also on the number and the circumstances of all mortal sins.*

(a.) We can sin *by thoughts*, if we voluntarily and with pleasure represent to ourselves something bad and do not banish the thought, although we know that it is sinful.

(b.) *By desires*, if we do not only take pleasure in bad thoughts, but have even a desire for the act itself, namely, to see, hear, possess, or do what is bad. These bad thoughts and desires are mortal sins, if they regard what is grievously sinful and the consent be perfect. This examination of ourselves with regard to sins of thought and desire is very important, for on it frequently hinges the validity of our confession.

(c.) *By words*, when we use bad or immodest language. The sins of the tongue are without number and frequently mortal, wherefore we must carefully examine ourselves with regard to them, especially obscene words, curses, imprecations, blasphemies, calumnies, slander, and detraction.

(d.) *By works*, if we really do something bad; and *by omissions*, if we omit the good which we could and should do.

3. That we may the better remember the sins which we have committed—

(a.) *We should go through the commandments and the precepts of the Church.* At each of these commandments represent to yourselves what they command or forbid, and examine yourselves and see if you have not sinned against them.

(b.) *Through the obligations of our state of life.* Parents, children, husbands and wives, single persons, superiors and inferiors, merchants, lawyers, physicians, the rich and the poor, etc., have particular duties. On a conscientious performance of these duties depends their salvation;

therefore it is necessary that all examine themselves carefully about them.

(c.) *Through the other different kinds of sin.* These are the seven deadly sins, the six sins against the Holy Ghost, the four sins crying to heaven for vengeance, and the nine ways of being accessory to another person's sins.

### PART III.

In the examination of conscience, we must guard against the following faults:

1. *We must not examine ourselves too hastily and superficially.* The Council of Trent (14 sess. 5 *chapt.*) expressly requires a diligent searching of every nook and corner of the conscience. In order to examine the conscience properly, we must employ the necessary time and diligence in it, for the examination of the conscience is an important matter, because on it depends the entirety, and, consequently, the validity of the confession. You must, therefore, employ as much diligence in the examination of conscience as in other important affairs. As to how much time we ought to employ in the examination of conscience, no general rule can be given. The more carelessly we have lived, and the longer we have stayed away from confession, the more time and diligence we ought to employ in examining ourselves.

2. *We must not conceal our favorite sins from ourselves.* All men have faults to which they are particularly inclined, which they love as their darlings, and therefore also frequently commit. Now, if such Christians examine their conscience, their favorite sin occurs to their mind, but their self-love endeavors to palliate or excuse this fault in every possible way. Nay, self-love goes so far as to strip such favorite sins of their evil nature, and represent them as praiseworthy actions. Thus it calls pride and ambition, self-respect; avarice, prudent economy; unchaste love, friendship. This self-love frequently so deceives men that they either do not accuse themselves at all of the sin to which they are most addicted, or if they do, confess it without sorrow. In spite of the sermons they hear, in spite of all the confessor may say, they will not bring themselves to think it serious. Long habit coupled with the machinations of Satan has brought upon them a perversity of intellect so that they can not see themselves in regard to that particular sin as the angels and even their fellow-men see them. Such persons are in desperate need of the light of the Holy Ghost. They are in imminent danger of making bad confessions. You must, therefore, be on your guard, that, in the examination of your conscience, you do not permit yourselves to be controlled by self-love or the spirit of the

world, and you must not take all that to be trifling which the world considers as such, but place yourselves in spirit before the tribunal of God.

3. *We must avoid becoming too scrupulous.* The Council of Trent says (14 sess. ch. 5): It is impious to say confession is impossible, or to consider it as an institution of torture. For it is known that the Church requires nothing of the penitents but that, having examined themselves carefully, and searched all the nooks and corners of their conscience, they confess all the grievous sins which they recollect; the other sins which, in spite of the examination, they do not remember, are considered as included in the confession. Hence they should say with the prophet, "from my secret sins deliver me."—*Ps.* 18: 13. He, therefore, who examines his conscience candidly and as well as he can before every confession, has no reason to be scrupulous. Even if it should happen that he do not recollect some grievous sin, it is considered as included in the confession, and is remitted with the sins confessed. If he should afterwards remember it, he has only to confess this sin, without repeating the whole confession.

#### PERORATION.

These are the rules to be observed in the examination of conscience. You will facilitate this important business of examination before confession, if you examine your conscience daily and do not delay confession too long. Follow these two rules, and you shall receive the Sacrament of Penance always worthily.

### SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

## 4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

#### THE INSTITUTION OF THE FORTY DAYS' FAST.

*"Lord, it is good for us to be here."—Matt. 17: 4.*

Peter sees only a weak ray of the divine majesty, and he is in a transport of joy and can only exclaim: "Lord, it is good for us to be here." Oh! how glorious and beautiful must it be in heaven, where our glorified brethren dwell in close proximity to God and behold him face to face! I do not doubt that all of you have the most ardent desire after the blessed vision of God and those unspeakable joys which are con-

nected with that vision. But that you may obtain that blessed end, you must follow Jesus. And, as his whole life was a pure self-denial, mortification and continual carrying of the cross, nothing remains for us but to mortify our flesh with its concupiscences, and to walk in the way of the cross. We must practice these holy exercises during Lent, because it is a time of penance. I shall speak to-day on this holy time, and answer the following two questions:

- I. Why did the Church institute the forty days' fast?*
- II. Why does she celebrate this time immediately before Easter?*

#### PART I.

The Church instituted the forty days' fast, which St. Chrysostom and Pope Leo the Great declared to be an apostolic ordinance, for two reasons—

*1 Because the most renowned Saints of the Old Law, and Jesus Christ himself, fasted forty days.*

(a.) As we read in the book of Exodus (*Exodus 24: 18*), Moses went up into a mountain, and he was there "forty days and forty nights, neither eating bread nor drinking water."—*Deut. 9: 9*. He observed a strict fast. That God was pleased with the fast of Moses we can not for a moment doubt, for he favored him with his most intimate conversation, and gave him the two tables of stone on which he had written his holy commandments with his own hands. God also transfigured him, in some measure, in his mortal body, for rays emanated from his head, and his face shone as the sun, so that he was obliged to put a veil on his face when he spoke to the Israelites, because they could not endure his splendor.

(b) Elias kept a forty days' fast on his way to Mount Horeb. God was also pleased with his fast; for he favored him with a wonderful apparition, and took him to himself, not by death, but living, in a fiery chariot. Jesus distinguished both these Saints, Moses and Elias, by making them witnesses of his transfiguration upon Mount Thabor.

St. Chrysostom points us to these two great men of the Old Law, when he exhorts us to observe conscientiously the forty days' fast: When the great Moses had fasted forty days, he was worthy to receive the tables of the law, and, when coming down from the mountain and beholding the wickedness of the people, he broke them, he was again obliged to fast forty days, in order to receive the tables anew from above. An equally long fast was kept by Elias, who, taken up into heaven in a fiery chariot, never saw death.

(c.) Jesus likewise fasted in the desert forty days and forty nights, before he began his public career. St Chrysostom remarks: "Our Lord Jesus Christ himself fasted forty days and forty nights, before he entered into the combat with the devil, and thus gave us all an example, that by it we should arm ourselves and gain strength for the combat with the enemy." Christ fasted, not for his sake, but for ours, to repair the sin of our progenitors, which, by our descent from them, became also our sin, and to redeem them and us from the consequences of this sin. It is therefore but just that we should deprive ourselves of some meat and drink, and observe the forty days' fast according to the ordinance of the Church. Therefore St. Ambrose says: If you wish to be a Christian, you must do what Christ did. He, who was without sin, fasted forty days; and you, who sin, will not fast forty days. He, I say, had no sin, and fasted for our sins. What kind of Christians are you, according to the testimony of your own conscience, if, during the time that Christ hungered for you, you satiate yourselves more than once a day?

2. *To remind us of the duty of acknowledging God as our Supreme Lord and benefactor, and of giving the tithe due him.* St. Gregory the Great says: The forty days' fast should be scrupulously kept, and the fast should not be broken at all, with the exception of the Sundays, for these days are the tenth part of the year. For, counting from the first Sunday of Lent till Easter, we have six weeks, which comprise forty-two days; if we deduct from them the six Sundays, which are not days of fasting, there remain yet thirty-six fasting days. Since the year comprises three hundred and sixty-five days, and we fast thirty-six days, we give to God, as it were, the tenth part. But, that the holy number of forty days may be completed, which our Lord consecrated by his fasting, four days of the preceding week, namely, Ash Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, are added.

It is but just that the proprietor receive rent from the tenant. God is the proprietor of the universe. He owns us. We belong, with all that we have, to him. He demands what is, as it were, his due out of his property. Shall we unjustly withhold it? He demands neither our money nor our goods—with these we are to assist his poor—but a contrite heart. "A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit; a contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."—*Ps.* 50: 19. This is the tithe which we owe to God; we must strictly keep the forty days' fast, mortify ourselves interiorly and exteriorly, and bring forth fruits worthy of penance.



## PART II.

There are three reasons why the Church has ordained the celebration of the forty days' fast immediately before Easter.

1. *To guard us against the dangers which the springtime brings with it for the salvation of our soul.* Easter, as is known, always occurs in the time of spring. As beautiful as this time is, it has many dangers, and, in general, more than any other season of the year. As the whole of nature awakens in spring, and drives the sap from the roots to the extremities of the boughs and branches, and makes everything bloom throughout the vegetable kingdom, so in that microcosm or miniature world—man—everything revives, and there arise motions which frequently cause violent temptations. Man, too, comes forth from the ice-bound solitude in which winter held him captive, and takes part in various amusements and entertainments which are gotten up at this festive occasion. How easily may the springtime be to him an occasion of various sins, especially sins against holy purity!

What does the Church do to protect us from the dangers of spring? She makes the forty days' fast precede this time, and thereby gives an excellent means for preserving us from sin. If feasting is the oil for the fire of concupiscence, fasting is the water that drowns its blazing flame, so that it can not break out. By the exercises of mortification the sensual lusts are not only weakened and kept down, but the spirit is strengthened to hold its sway more easily over sensuality and the flesh, and to labor more earnestly to secure the great one thing necessary—the salvation of the soul.

2. *To call to our mind the mystery of the bitter Passion and death of our Saviour.* Shortly before Easter, on Good Friday, Jesus died on the cross for us. The entire forty days' fast is dedicated to this greatest mystery of the divine love, wherefore during that time various devotions in honor of the bitter Passion and death of Jesus are held, such as the stations of the cross, the rosary, and lectures on the Passion. Is it not quite natural, that at a time in which we celebrate the memory of the bitter Passion and death of our Lord, we should fast and pray, renounce worldly joys and pleasures, and practice penitential works? Suppose a father lies on his dying bed, and expires in great agony. How will the children behave? Will they eat and drink, be merry, and enjoy themselves as at any other time? Will they have a good time whilst their father groans on his bed of pain, or already in the agonies of death? Certainly not, unless the last spark of filial love and gratitude be extinguished in their hearts. Who is nearer to us, our father or Jesus? Who loves us more, our father or Jesus? Who confers on us greater gifts, our father or Jesus? And should we live

in levity and serve the desires of the flesh in the time of Lent, in which Jesus suffers and dies for us ?

3. *To prepare ourselves for the worthy reception of the holy Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist.* At Easter, or thereabouts, every Christian is bound to receive communion; and in order to receive this Sacrament worthily, he must go to confession. He who does not comply with this precept of the Church, commits a mortal sin, and exposes himself to the danger of being deprived of Christian burial. It is evident that both these Sacraments must be received worthily. Now, the question is, who are they likely to be who shall make a good confession and communion ? Perhaps those who up to the day of confession live in levity and forgetfulness of God, and give not the least sign of repentance ? Assuredly not; with good reason it is to be feared that such persons shall receive the Sacraments unworthily, for want of contrition and a firm purpose of amendment. Christians who are in earnest with their conversion show before the reception of the Sacraments penitential sentiments, practice works of mortification, devotion, and mercy, in order to render themselves worthy of the forgiveness of sin. Now, since the Church ardently wishes us to confess and communicate at Easter or thereabouts, she makes the forty days' fast precede Easter, and prescribes various exercises of penance, which enable us to receive worthily the holy Sacraments.

#### PERORATION.

Let us, then, to-day earnestly resolve to spend the forty days' fast in a spirit of penance, according to the example of all who are solicitous for their salvation. The aim and object of the fast is simply to arouse us to the necessity of changing our lives for the better, and awakening in us this penitential spirit. Take to heart and obey the words of advice which St. Ambrose addressed to the believers of his time: Behold, beloved brethren, the holy days and the acceptable time have come again, of which it is written: Behold, now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation. Therefore you must be fervent in watching, fasting, giving alms, and praying. These days are ordained that the sins of the whole year may be blotted out in the forty days by penance. Believe it, and believe it firmly: if, in these days, you make a sincere confession and do penance, like the Ninevites, you shall obtain the forgiveness of all your sins, and if, following their example, you call upon the Lord with your whole heart, you shall draw down upon you the divine mercy, so that you shall joyfully and securely celebrate the day of the Resurrection of the Lord, and after this life happily enter into the heavenly country. Amen.

## SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

## 5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

## SPIRITUAL TRANSFIGURATION.

*"He was transfigured before them."—Matt. 17: 2.*

The gospel of this day exhibits to us the divine Saviour in a transfigured form. His face shines as the sun, his garments are white as snow; Moses and Elias, those two most renowned Saints of the Old Law, appear and give testimony that he is the Messiah and the promised Redeemer. And God, the heavenly Father, publishes with a loud voice from heaven, that Jesus is his well-beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased, and who must be heard. Peter, in a transport of joy on account of what he sees and hears, is beside himself, and cries out, "Lord, it is good for us to be here."

Why does the Church single out a gospel the contents of which are so joyous for this Lenten Sunday? The better to exhort us to penance, by pointing to the fruit of penance, which consists in our eternal glorification in heaven. The history of the transfiguration of Jesus shall be to us a picture of our spiritual transfiguration, which is to take place in this holy fasting time. We shall meditate on this to-day. I say, to attain to our spiritual transfiguration, it is necessary—

- I. That we go apart and ascend a high mountain;*
- II. That we take three companions with us;*
- III. That we change our form.*

## PART I.

The Gospel says that Jesus took unto him three of his disciples, and brought them up into a high mountain.

To become spiritually transfigured, it is necessary—

*I. That we go apart.* As long as a man finds pleasure in the world, participates in its frivolities, especially does not avoid the proximate occasions of sin, true penance and conversion are out of the question. Hence, we see that all true penitents retired from the world as much as possible. Examples: Peter, who left the society in which he had denied his divine Master, *went out*, and wept bitterly. Paul, who locked himself in for three days and fasted and prayed. Matthew, who at once left his office and followed Jesus. Therefore we read in the

Following of Christ: He who wishes to arrive at an interior and spiritual life, must with Jesus go away from the crowd, for, as a fish soon dies out of the water, so he who spends no time in solitude, is soon distracted and defiled.

Live, therefore, during Lent as retired as is compatible with your state of life, and avoid company and entertainments, particularly places and persons that heretofore have been an occasion of scandal to you. If it costs you some self-denial, think of Jesus, who for the love of us spent forty days in the desert.

2. *That we ascend a mountain.* Not in the depth of this world must we seek the heavenly and spiritual transfiguration of our soul, but above, in the heavenly heights; and all who wish to see God, must not content themselves with a powerless wish, but must, with an active love for heavenly things, always strive for the things above. He who is truly converted, longs for those things. It is true, he lives in the world, but not with the world; he has no inordinate love for it; he enjoys pleasure sometimes, but only a licit and becoming one; he possesses land and money, but he sets not his heart and affections upon them; in a word, he says with the Apostle: "The time is short; it remaineth, that they also who have wives, be as those who have not; and they who weep, as they who weep not; and they who rejoice, as they who are not rejoicing; and they who buy, as if they were not possessing anything, and they who use this world, as if they used it not, for the figure of this world passeth away."—*I Cor 7: 29-31*

3. *That we ascend a high mountain.* The higher a mountain, the more difficult it is to ascend it. Penance is a high, rugged mountain; it costs labor and demands sacrifices. It is always arduous to renounce sin, to which we are inclined by nature, especially because the devil and the world throw every kind of obstacle in the way of conversion. Not a few sinners are obliged to root up old, deeply-seated, inveterate habits, and what is more difficult than this? "If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots, you also may do well when you have learned evil."—*Jerem. 13: 23.* "Habitual sin," says St. Jerome, "fetters the spirit, that it can no more rise to do well. It tries, and fails; for where it voluntarily perseveres, it yields to compulsion, although it wills not." St. Anselm once saw a child who for pastime had fastened a thread to the foot of a bird. The bird flew into the air, but was always drawn back by the lad. The Saint looked at this cruelty with a sad countenance and compassion for the poor bird. Finally the thread broke and the bird flew off through the air. The lad commenced to blubber and cry, but the Saint laughed, and was rejoiced. His companions wondered at the behavior of the holy bishop.

but he said to them: "Have you seen the pastime of the boy with the bird? Know you, that the devil plays with many people in the same way, whom, when he has once tied with his ropes, he usually draws them at his pleasure from one sin into another." Many who are addicted to impurity, injustice, drunkenness, and cursing, know their unhappy state, and frequently sigh and moan, saying: Oh, that I were once again free from this wretched habit. They sometimes make an attempt, like that bird, to fly into the air and earnestly to amend their lives, but what does it profit them? They are bound. The devil draws them back on account of their long habit into their former sins, and they are not freed, if the grace of God does not finally by violence break and force asunder the bad habit. Let every sinner, especially the habitual sinner, ask himself: Is it not so? To do penance is, indeed, to ascend a high, precipitous mountain. Let every sinner also consider that if he does not ascend this high mountain, he must descend into the precipice of hell. Either ascend or descend, either go up or down.

## PART II.

Jesus took with him to his transfiguration on the mountain, three companions, Peter James, and John. We also need these three companions in order to ascend the mountain of the spiritual transfiguration, or penance. What do the three Apostles symbolize? Peter, the rock upon which the Church is built, signifies *faith*; James, who was the first among the Apostles that obtained the crown of martyrdom, *hope*; and John, whom the Lord loved, *charity*. Our companions must be—

1 *Faith*. Faith is necessary to a true penance and reconciliation with God, because without it we are entirely separated from God, and we first approach him by it; wherefore the Apostle says: "Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh to God must believe.—*Heb.* 11: 6. It is faith that convinces us of the necessity of penance and offers us the strongest motives for penance. It tells us: 'Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish.'—*Luke* 13: 3. 'Be penitent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.'—*Acts* 3: 19. It directs us to God, who, in his infinite mercy, is ready to forgive every, even the greatest sinner, who does penance, but who also condemns without mercy all the impenitent. It proposes the highest motives to us: to the good, an eternity of joys, which it represents as a marriage-feast, a kingdom, a heaven, a paradise, where delights and joys shall be without end in the sight and enjoyment of God; and an eternity of torments for the wicked, which it represents as a *gehenna* of fire, a place of darkness, of weeping and gnashing of teeth.

But because many sinners have lost their faith, or are weak in it, and do not take to heart its truths, only a few of them do true penance. Oh, that the faith may again become living in the hearts of all, to prepare for them the path of penance!

2. *Hope.* Represent to yourselves a sinner who has lost all hope of obtaining forgiveness of his sins; can he be converted while in that state? No. And why not? Because he considers conversion useless. He will say within himself: Why should I be at pains to do penance, since I have no forgiveness to hope from God? Such an unfortunate sinner will remain impenitent; he may, perhaps, in order to escape the remorse of conscience, like Judas, lay hands on his own life, and deliver himself to eternal damnation before his time. How necessary, then, for repentance is hope! It is hope that rescues man from despair, encourages him, and inspires him with confidence, and impels him to save his soul by penance. Was it not hope that animated Mary Magdalen to go to Jesus, and to obtain the forgiveness of her sins? Was it not hope that gave courage to the penitent thief on the cross, to say to the dying Saviour: "Lord, remember me, when thou shalt come into thy kingdom," whereupon he heard the answer: "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise." Was it not hope in the goodness of his father that nerved the prodigal, humble and contrite, to return to his father's house?

3. *Charity.* By its very nature it is essential to a reconciliation with God. As long as the sinner is indifferent about God and has no desire of pleasing him, or working for him, or belonging to him; as long as he thinks of God as one with whom he has nothing to do, thinks of him as a stranger, as one far removed nor concerned in him or his affairs, true conversion and consequently forgiveness of sin is out of the question. The man's mind is wholly perverted. Not only has he no love, no reverence, no fear of God, he does not even recognize him as his Creator. God has no place at all in his life or thoughts. He may not deny the existence of God; he knows or he believes that God exists. But what of that? Such knowledge or faith will avail him little. Hence St. Augustine says: "The faith of the Christian must be united with charity; the devil also has faith without charity." It is charity that impels the sinner to do penance, for "charity is strong as death."—*Canticle 8: 6.* What is earthly love not capable of doing? What does not man undertake, to gratify his ambition covetousness, and carnal lust, or his desire of revenge? To what dangers does he not expose himself, what difficulties does he not overcome, what obstacles surmount? And what will heavenly and divine love not be able to accomplish? Oh, if it once rule in the heart of the sinner, he shall experience the most bitter pain and grief over his misdeeds; he will tear with a

strong hand the fetters of sin; and, full of contrition, implore mercy and grace. He will be ready rather to die than to offend God any more. Example: Mary Magdalen. She tears herself from the companions of her sin, hastens to Jesus, rushes into the dining-hall, where many guests are assembled, disregards their rash judgment, throws herself down before Jesus, washes his feet with her tears, and goes not away till she hears from him the consoling words: "Thy sins are forgiven thee."—*Luke 7: 48*. Oh, that this holy and divine love would seize the hearts of all men; how promptly and manfully would they enter upon the way of penance, and how constantly would they walk in it !

### PART III.

The Gospel says of the divine Saviour: "*He was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as snow.*" This transfiguration is a symbol of the interior and exterior transfiguration of the true penitent.

1. True penance changes and transforms the *whole interior of man*. As long as man lives in the state of sin, his heart is turned away from God, virtue is repugnant to him, or at least indifferent; he is never occupied with the affairs of his soul, but lives in distraction and forgetfulness of salvation. He loathes all exercises of religion, such as prayer, hearing the word of God, spiritual reading, the reception of the Sacraments; he therefore either neglects them altogether, or practices them only very seldom, hastily, and without the proper sentiments. On the contrary, he is pleased with temporal and earthly things, continually entertains bad thoughts and desires, is governed by his passions, and without any scruple offends God by grievous sins. This is the interior of a sinner. But how differently minded is the true penitent! Full of contrition, love, and gratitude, he turns to God, he detests above all things the evil he has done; he is grieved most profoundly for having offended God so often and so grievously, and he is resolved never more to sin. He rejoices at virtue, and devotes himself with fervor and love to the exercises of religion.

This is the transmutation which must be effected in the sinner who intends to be counted among the true penitents. Therefore the Lord says by the prophet: "Be converted to me with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning. Rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord, for he is gracious and merciful, patient, and rich in mercy."—*Joel 2: 12, 13*. "Cast away from you all your transgressions by which you have transgressed, and make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit."—*Ezech. 18: 31*. This interior change and amendment of heart was effected in all true penitents. Example: Mary Magdalen. Her going into the house of the

Pharisee, her appearance before the guests, her humble silence at their contemptuous looks, her tears which she shed lying at the feet of Jesus, gave testimony that her heart was totally changed and renewed. Let every one prove himself whether this change has been wrought in him at his confessions, for, if it were wanting, his penance may have been only an appearance and delusion.

2. Penance changes and transforms also *the exterior of man*. At the transfiguration of Jesus upon Mount Thabor, such a strong light streamed from his sacred body, that it permeated his garments and made them as white as snow. The like may be said of penance. The change which penance produces in the interior of man soon manifests itself exteriorly in a well-regulated life. Above all, the penitent avoids those sins which he committed heretofore; he lives no longer unchastely, he avoids dissolute discourses, he refrains from drunkenness and gambling, he curses and blasphemes no more. He practices with fervor the good which he formerly neglected, he goes to Church regularly, assists devoutly at divine worship, and frequently approaches the Sacraments of Confession and Communion. In his whole conduct he is retired, walks in the fear of God, and gives good example. Every one who knew him before, must say of him: He is a different man altogether from what he was; he is totally changed and renewed. It is true, even the true penitent may sin again, and sin grievously, but it happens only very seldom; as a rule, even when he does fall he does not long remain in the state of sin, but aided by the grace of God, rises from his fall, reconciles himself again with God, and walks the more cautiously and zealously in the way of penance. All true penitents do this. If we therefore see Christians who, after their confessions, always relapse into their former sins and show no amendment, it is an evident sign that they are not true, but only apparent, penitents.

#### PERORATION.

You are aware now how you can attain to the spiritual transfiguration, that is, to a true penance and reconciliation with God. Go apart, avoid the frivolous company of the sinful world, look upwards, disengage your heart from all inordinate love of earthly things, and spare no sacrifice which a true conversion may demand, for there is question of the salvation of your immortal soul. Take, then, for your companions the three divine virtues, *faith, hope, and charity*; change your form by renewing yourselves interiorly and exteriorly, and by amending your lives. Employ the present holy season of Lent for your spiritual transfiguration, that it may become to you a time of grace and salvation. Amen.



## SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

## 6. MORAL SKETCH

IT IS GOOD TO BE IN HEAVEN.

*"Peter said to Jesus: Lord, it is good for us to be here."—Matt. 17: 4.*

Last Sunday we found Jesus in the desert, where he fasted and prayed forty days and forty nights; to-day we see him on Mount Thabor in heavenly transfiguration. These two events, though distant from each other with respect to time, are ranged immediately after each other, and follow each other in the gospels selected by the Church to be read during the holy season of Lent. And not without reason has the Church arranged them so, for, by representing to us Jesus fasting and praying in the desert, she shows him to us as a model of how we are to spend this holy time; and by representing him to us to-day in his transfiguration, she directs our attention to the reward in view, which shall most assuredly be ours, provided we diligently employ this time in the exercise of mortification and prayer. We may then hope to see the Triune God in his infinite glory in heaven, and full of rapture, we shall cry out: "Lord, it is good for us to be here."

The thought of the joys of heaven should encourage us to spend the holy season of Lent according to the ordinance of the Church, in a spirit of compunction and penance. But not only during Lent, but at all times, we should call to our mind the joys of heaven, and particularly—

*I. In all our works;**II. In all our sufferings.*

## PART I.

We have a double task upon earth, one that refers to our *eternal*, and the other, which refers to our *temporal* life. That in both these tasks we may fulfil our duties, let us remember that it is good to be in heaven.

*1. Work for our eternal life.*

(a.) This consists, above all, in a faithful performance of our religious duties. But religion obliges us to keep the commandments of God and the precepts of his Church, and to avail ourselves of the means for our purification and sanctification. The person who does what God, and

in his name the Church prescribes, who keeps the ten commandments of God and the six precepts of the Church, who prays, hears the word of God, and frequently receives the Sacraments worthily, that person labors for eternal life. But he who violates this, that, and the other commandment of God and of the Church, and is careless in the employment of the means of salvation, belongs to that class of people who are standing idle in the market-place of the world, and can not hope in the evening of life to receive the wages of laborers in the vineyard of the Lord.

(b.) Alas, there are many Christians who do not labor for eternal life. They do not keep the commandments, and yet, "If thou wilt enter into life," says Christ, "keep the commandments." Or can it be called keeping the commandments of God, to break out frequently into curses and blasphemies, to desecrate Sundays and holidays by gross sins, to be disobedient to parents, and by stubbornness grieve them, to live in enmity with their fellow-men for months and years, to yield to the base vice of impurity, and to commit fraud and injustice in their transactions? Can any such, or slanderers, or calumniators be said to keep the commandments? Can it be called keeping the precepts of the Church to eat meat on Fridays and other days of abstinence, to neglect to hear mass on Sundays and holidays, to keep away from confession and communion, and even at Easter not to receive the holy Sacraments, or receive them unworthily? Can it be called availing themselves of the means of grace, if prayer, hearing the word of God, or catechetical instruction and spiritual reading be as a thorn in their side? Oh, many, very many Christians do not work for eternal life.

(c.) How shall we account for this? They hardly ever think of heaven, they never say to themselves: "It is good to be in heaven." They do not consider what a great good heaven is, what unspeakable happiness the Saints enjoy there; they therefore have no desire for heaven, and because they do not long for heaven, they do not do what is required for heaven. What shall be the feelings of such worldly Christians when, sooner or later, they shall be face to face with eternity? If Esau wept so bitterly over the loss of his birthright and of his father's blessing, which he had bartered for a mess of pottage, how much more reason to weep shall not those Christians have when they realize that they have bartered their glorious and everlasting birthright of heaven's joys for the miserable transitory pleasures of this world? We need not wonder that there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when they shall be obliged to say: "I have lost heaven for such fleeting, vain, and perishable things." Never, therefore, lose sight of those unfading glories of the heavenly Jerusalem

Say frequently to yourselves: "God has created me for heaven, not for this miserable earth; therefore I shall labor for heaven." If you be tempted to sin, say to yourselves: "How could I be so foolish as to lose heaven on account of this or that sin?" Resolve every morning: "I shall endeavor to-day in all things to do the will of God, that I may merit heaven, *for it is good to be there.*"

2. *Work for the temporal life.*

(a) *It is good to be in heaven.* This must be your favorite maxim in all your temporal business and labor. To work is a commandment of God: "Man is born to labor, and the bird to fly."—*Job* 5: 7. God himself said to Adam: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread."—*Gen* 3: 19. It would be a great error to believe that you must toil only to earn your daily bread. No, every one must work, the rich and the poor, the high and the low, for labor is prescribed, not only as a means of gaining a livelihood in the world, but also for the service of God, and the obtaining of our eternal salvation. He that does not work when he can, neglects an essential duty of religion, and has reason to fear that he shall share hereafter the lot of the unprofitable servant.

(b.) But that our labor may be meritorious for eternal life, it must be performed in the *state of grace and with a good intention.* He who labors hard from the beginning of the year to the end thereof, but lives in the state of sin, need not expect a reward hereafter. The same holds good of labors that are not done with a good intention. He who in his labors turns his eyes away from God and has solely his temporal interest in view, for example, the gaining of a livelihood or the gratification of his passions, has no part in the service of God, nor can he lay any claim to a reward in eternity. A Saint once had a wonderful vision. He saw that the souls of the departed appeared before the judgment-seat of God and that their works were weighed in the balance of divine justice. Among many others, a man came loaded down with a large bundle of good works. The Saint thought: Now the bundle will fall heavily into the balance and the carrier will surely go straight to heaven. But, behold, when the bundle was laid in the balance it proved as light as a feather, and the balance flew up. And why? Because the bundle contained good works which had been performed in the state of sin and without a good intention.

See then to it that you be not wanting in the balance, that your works resemble not a feather-light bundle. Labor in the state of grace and with a good intention. That this may be done, let us frequently say to ourselves: "*It is good to be in heaven.*" If we consider that with our daily labors we can merit heaven with its unspeakable joys, we shall

certainly exert ourselves to perform them in such a manner that we may obtain the desired end.

## PART II.

"A heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam, from the day of their coming out of their mother's womb, unto the day of their burial into the mother of all."—*Eccles.* 40: 1. And so, indeed, there is. Without pain no one lives upon earth, and without tribulation no one goes out of the world. *A pious life carries many pains with it*; moreover, we meet with *other tribulations*. But, that we may be able to bear all disagreeable things patiently and perseveringly, let us think of our maxim, "*It is good to be in heaven.*"

### 1. *The pains and hardships of a pious life.*

(a.) Christ said not in vain: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away."—*Matt.* 11: 12. He who wishes to live in such a manner as to justify a well-grounded hope that he shall one day be admitted to the kingdom of God, he must daily mortify himself, and tame his evil inclinations and sinful desires. He is variously and constantly tempted. At one time it is anger that swells in his throat and threatens to burst all bounds, at another a moody reflection on some real or fancied injury, prompting emotions of hatred and vengeful desires, then unchaste fancies and feelings, again self-complacency or covetousness, or too great a longing after honor and praise. All these inordinate motions and desires must be struggled against and suppressed, else they will not only be sinful in themselves, but will also afford the occasion for many sins. But the contest with and the conquering of these enemies of our salvation is a difficult work, and costs many sacrifices. The holy Fathers and spiritual writers therefore call the Christian who conquers himself a greater hero than the general who takes fortresses by storm and subdues mighty kingdoms; nay, they do not hesitate to say that continual mortifications and self-denial are an unbloody martyrdom, which, in merit, can worthily be placed in juxtaposition with bloody, actual martyrdom itself. Our interior enemies have confederates without, the devil with his endless temptations, and the world with its scandals, bad examples, and persecutions, which no less aggravate a pious life.

(b.) What shall we do to overcome all these difficulties and obstacles in the way of virtue? We must look up to heaven and frequently say to ourselves, "*It is good to be in heaven.*" Consider all that worldly people do and endure in order to acquire the means for having a good time and enjoy a pleasant life. How many labors and pains do they

not take upon themselves? If, for the sake of vain and perishable goods, they undergo so many hardships and privations, should we be deterred by the hardships which heaven demands—heaven with all its ineffable, eternal joys? What supported St. Paul, the holy martyrs, and other saints, in all the persecutions and tribulations which they were obliged to suffer for the sake of Christ? What but the remembrance of the reward in heaven? “Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake; rejoice and be exceedingly glad, because your reward is very great in heaven.”—*Matt.* 5: 11, 12.

### 2. Other sufferings.

(a.) Many are languishing in poverty and need, and have no other prospect than to live and die poor. How many cares and tribulations do not children cause parents. How many annoyances are to be met with at your daily work, in the household, everywhere; whether you be laborer, tradesman, or follow a profession, it is all the same. There is no state of life that has not its hardships, and no man without his cross. The earth on which we live is, as it were, a cemetery, in which one cross stands in close proximity to another, a land upon which, since the fall of Adam, the curse of God rests, a valley of tears. “Great labor is created for all men.”—*Eccles.* 40: 1. “Man born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries.”—*Job* 14: 1.

In all these sufferings and tribulations what is there to inspire us with courage and give us strength to persevere in patience? What else but the maxim: “*It is good to be in heaven.*” When the life of Theodosius the Abbot was drawing near its close he suffered a most painful sickness, which he endured with heroic patience. A sympathizing friend advised him to ask of God the alleviation of his sufferings. “Oh, no,” replied the Saint, “such a prayer would be a sign of impatience, and would deprive me of my crown.” He was obliged to suffer on for a whole year, before falling quietly asleep in the Lord. St. Teresa frequently repeated the words, “Lord, either to die or to suffer.” St. Rose of Lima, in the midst of the greatest torture, cried out: “More yet, O Lord, more yet! Do thy will in me, add pain to pain, but increase also my patience.” How can we account for this patience and fortitude in sufferings? By the maxim, “*It is good to be in heaven.*” Heaven, they said, is worth suffering for. They comforted themselves with the words of the Apostle: “Our present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.”—*II. Cor.* 4: 17.

## PERORATION.

In all *your toil and sufferings* repeat frequently: "*It is good to be in heaven.*" If you always have heaven with its joys before your eyes, you shall certainly fulfil your duties conscientiously in every respect; you shall also be solicitous to perform them in the state of grace and with a good intention, that they may please God and become meritorious for eternal life. Looking forward thus to heaven will also encourage you to bear the hardships of the service of God and the tribulations of this life. This should be your maxim: "*It is good to be in heaven.*" With this maxim on your lips and in your heart you shall be emboldened to dare and to do, to toil and to suffer, and so finally merit heaven, where with Peter and all the elect, you can exclaim throughout all eternity, "*It is good to be here.*" Amen.

## SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

## 7. MORAL SKETCH.

## WE MAY HAVE A HEAVEN UPON EARTH.

"*His face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as snow.*"—  
Matt. 17: 2.

Who would be able to describe the joy and transport of the Apostles who were deemed worthy to behold Jesus in his transfiguration upon the holy mountain? Their joy and felicity was so great that Peter, entirely beside himself in ecstasy, cried out: "Lord, it is good for us to be here." Forgetting everything in the world, he had only one wish, to remain always upon the mountain, near his transfigured Saviour.

As long as we live in this mortal life it is not given to us to behold Jesus in the splendor of his divine majesty, and, as it were, to be caught up into heaven. Nevertheless, it is possible for us to have a foretaste of that beatitude which the Saints enjoy in heaven; we may, as the saying is, *have a heaven upon earth*, if we, as I will show to-day at some length—

- I. *Have a good conscience;*
- II. *Resign ourselves to the will of God;*
- III. *Live in peace and concord.*

## PART I.

1. A good conscience *seasons our enjoyments, facilitates our labors, and comforts us in tribulations and sufferings.* How merry, how joyful are innocent little children in their plays and amusements! The plays, insignificant as they are, afford them greater pleasure than do the most costly enjoyments to grown persons. Many a one says: "Oh, for the return of those happy days! Often does my mind revert to those happy reminiscences of my childhood's innocent days. Alas! I can no longer be as merry as a child!" But why are children so merry? Because they are innocent and have not yet drunk of the bitter chalice of sin. We may often hear the poor woodman sing his merry songs; or who has not seen the dust-begrimed laborer, bucket in hand, wending his way to his humble cottage, to eat there with cheerful countenance, and surrounded by dear little ones, his frugal meal? Or have you never noticed a poor beggar approaching timidly to your door and ask good-humoredly for a crust of bread? Whence comes this happy expression of their countenance? From a good conscience. "He who has a good conscience," says St. Chrysostom, "is, in the most oppressing circumstances, much happier and more content than others who are deprived of this good in the midst of riches."

2. Add to this, that the joy which comes from a good conscience is *not changeable.* Solomon compares a good conscience to a continual feast.—*Prov. 15: 15.* Who does not admire Job in his trials? Let him lose his flocks, let a storm demolish his houses and bury his sons and daughters amidst their ruins, let him be reduced from abundance to the most abject poverty, let him be covered with leprosy and be derided and calumniated by his own wife, he remains patient and resigned to God in all vicissitudes; though he has lost all, he saved one thing—a good conscience; and it was this that supported him in his extreme adversity and abandonment.

3. Even in the hour of death a good conscience is a soft pillow. He that has a good conscience does not fear death; he looks cheerfully and joyfully into eternity, for faith tells him that there much more excellent and precious goods await him than the world can give. "With him that feareth the Lord, it shall go well in the latter end, and in the day of his death he shall be blessed."—*Eccles. 1: 13.* The holy Joseph Oriolo, a Spanish priest, who, during his whole life, had ceaselessly labored for his own and his neighbor's spiritual welfare, noticed that he should soon die, therefore he went to a tradesman with whom he was well acquainted, saying: "Dear friend, please lend me a bed, that

I may lie down, for I shall soon die." He lay down on the borrowed bed, and grew visibly weaker. The neighbors visited him, wept over his sickness and the great sufferings which it caused. But he cheerfully said to them: "My dear friends, be composed, for God will raise me up again to a new life and receive me into his kingdom, where I shall praise his holy name and sing his glory." Then he ordered four choir boys to come with the harp, and sing. Dying, he joined their song with a weak voice, having his eyes fixed upon the crucifix; and ardently longing for his Saviour, and singing, he surrendered his soul into the hands of his Redeemer on the 29th day of March, 1703.

If you preserve a good conscience, you shall have, in all the vicissitudes of life, and even in the hour of death, in some measure, a heaven upon earth.

## PART II.

1. He who is content with his situation, and lives quietly, has, as far as it is possible, a heaven upon earth. And this is truly the case with him who submits himself entirely to the will of God. Whatever God may send him, joy or sorrow, he is content; for he has what he wishes, because his will agrees in everything with the will of God. John Tauler, one of the greatest divines, and a most zealous servant of God, met one day a poor man, and saluted him with these words: "Good morning!" The poor man replied: "I have never had yet a bad morning." The learned man tried to amend his salutation, and said: "May the good God send you good luck." The beggar replied: "I have never yet been unlucky." Tauler thought the poor man was jesting; he therefore approached nearer and said: "I wish that all things may turn out according to your wish." "Nothing is done but what I wish, and therefore I am happy," replied the beggar. "How," said Tauler, "are you so happy, and yet there is no one on earth who is perfectly happy? Explain yourself." The beggar solved the riddle, saying: "I said that I have never had a bad morning, I am always satisfied with my lot; I said that I had never yet been unhappy, for I have no desire after the goods of fortune, and that is my fortune. I know that I have a Father in heaven, who means well with me; therefore I praise him when hunger torments me, or when I am obliged to bear heat or cold, or when bad boys mock me, for I think: Father, thou wilt it so, and hence I also will nothing else. Thus I always will only what God wills, and because I will what God wills, whatever happens to me, I will; and is this not the greatest good luck, that what one wills, is always done?"

2. He who resigns himself to the will of God, can never be disquieted or disturbed either by the present or the future.



1 *Not by the present.* There is scarcely a man in this world who has everything that he wishes, and among you all that are here assembled, there is certainly not one who can say: Nothing is wanting to me, all my wishes are gratified. The consequence is, that no man is perfectly satisfied with his present situation, and, therefore, no one feels entirely happy, nor yet perhaps entirely unhappy. But there is a means which enables us always to live quiet and content—resignation to the will of God. He that resigns himself to the will of God, will think: It is the will of an infinitely wise God, to whom I submit myself, and who, in everything that he ordains, has my welfare in view. My welfare is the rule of his actions. If he strike me, it is to amend me; if he spare me, it is for the same purpose. Thus a Christian who is resigned to the will of God is always quiet, composed, and content.

2. *Not by the future.* Many persons feel unhappy because they direct their thoughts always to the future, and on account of what may perhaps befall them in the distant future, are always full of disquietude and solicitude. Christians who are resigned to God do not fret about the future, nor become gray from the care of the future. They know that the future is decreed in the eternal council of Providence, and that all our fears, cares, and solicitude can not change in the least what, according to the will of God, shall come. They also know "that to them that love God all things work together unto good."—*Rom. 8: 28.* They are therefore quiet and content; and casting all their care upon the Lord, they say with David: "The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing."—*Ps. 22: 1.*

Resignation to the will of God is something great and valuable, for he that resigns himself to the will of God, knows nothing of bad humor, impatience, pusillanimity, or despondency; he is always cheerful, and possesses the most undisturbed peace of mind. All discontent among men proceeds from the want of resignation to the will of God. How necessary is it, therefore, that we resign ourselves to his holy will! How reasonably and conformably to Christian self-love do we act when, in all the events and occurrences of life, we submit ourselves to the will of God.

### PART III.

If there be anything under the sun that can make man truly happy and cheerful, it is peace and concord. St. Augustine says: "Peace is the hilarity of the mind, the rest of the soul, the simplicity of the heart, and the bond of charity." What salt is to victuals, peace is to all the circumstances, ups and downs and ins and outs, of life. You may have costly dishes on the table; they have no taste when they are not

seasoned with salt. In like manner, let a man have everything to make him happy: plenty of money and land, prosperity in business, good health, honor and good name, if he must live continually in dissension, he can neither be content nor happy; he relishes neither eating nor drinking, his sleep does not refresh him, nor does he find consolation even in prayer. A sad thing to contemplate is the home of a married couple into whose house the spirit of strife has entered. As soon as they open their eyes in the morning, hatred and ill-will awake also; one party will not speak kindly to the other; they talk only to quarrel and mutually to recriminate each other; the husband reviles the wife, the wife insults the husband, and then each is, either furtively or openly, doing things to spite and torment the other. Sometimes their mutual hatred breaks out into assault and battery; they go to law, and show the world how quarrelsome, unpeaceable, and, consequently, unhappy married people may be.

From such strife and discord follow of course the saddest consequences. In the first place, neither of the parties works with a will for the household. The business and work are neglected or done carelessly; the man, to get rid of his anger, seeks company, drinks and gambles; the woman gets disgusted with her work and lets things go as they will; the children grow up without discipline and turn out bad; and finally the whole family is broken up, according to the word of the Lord: "Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation."—*Luke 11: 17.*

2. How different is the aspect in a family where peace is found and mutual affection! It is a heaven upon earth! They may not be rich in the goods of this world, yet husband and wife are content, and the children are good and well-behaved. Everything looks cheerful and pleasant, as if they had money and land in abundance. When they rise in the morning, they say their morning prayers together, and all go cheerfully to their work. In the evening they tell one another their experiences, what they have done, what they have earned, whom they have seen, or what they have suffered. They converse together, take counsel together as to what and how they shall do, that all things may turn out well for them. Whatever they earn is common property. If God visit them with afflictions, they do not lose courage; one consoles the other; they pray, work, and suffer together, and hope in the Lord, who sends them help in the right time. If one of the family die, they heartily weep over the loss, but the thought that they have lived in peace and love with the departed member, and that in the next world they shall meet again, and in sweet peace live together for ever, is a great comfort to them in their bereavement. If there be upon earth, this valley of tears, a happy life, it is a peaceable one, and if there be a

family that can be called happy. it is that in which peace and harmony reign.

PERORATION.

I have now shewn you how you can have, as it were, a heaven upon earth. Above all things, preserve a good conscience, a serene mind, for, as St. Augustine says: "The joy of a good conscience is a paradise." In all the circumstances of life resign yourselves to the will of God, and pray with heart and mouth: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Live in peace with your neighbors and all around you. Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land. Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God. It is in your power to have a heaven here on earth, and what is still more, to obtain heaven hereafter. All you are obliged to do is to preserve a good conscience, to be meek, humble, peaceable, and resigned to the will of God. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.

**EPISTLE.** *Eph.* 5: 1-9. Brethren: Be ye followers of God, as most dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness. But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints: nor obscenity, nor foolish talking, nor scurrility, which is to no purpose: but rather giving of thanks. For know ye this, and understand, that no fornicator, nor unclean, nor covetous person, which is a serving of idols, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words. For because of these things cometh the anger of God upon the children of unbelief. Be ye not therefore partakers with them. For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk ye as children of the light: for the fruit of the light is in all goodness, and justice, and truth.

# 1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

ON IMPURITY.

In the beginning of the epistle for this day, St. Paul exhorts us to be followers of God, that is, to become conformable to God, according to the word of the divine Saviour. "Be you perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."—*Matt* 5: 48. And the reason why we should be followers of God is because we are his "most dear children." As good

children, who love their father and are loved by him, have the disposition and qualities of their father and take after him, so we as children of God must become conformable to God in our conduct. But because charity is the first and greatest precept and the bond of perfection, we must imitate him, above all in this, that "we walk in love." The most eminent model of love is Jesus Christ, "who hath loved us and hath delivered himself for us as an oblation and a sacrifice in the odor of sweetness."

After that the Apostle speaks of the vice of impurity, and shows—

- I. *How one can sin by this vice;*
- II. *Why we must guard against it.*

#### PART I.

*"Fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints, nor obscenity, nor foolish talking, nor scurrility, which is to no purpose; but rather giving thanks."* From these words of St. Paul it is evident that sins are committed against chastity—

1. *By fornication and all uncleanness.* To this class belong all impure actions, whether committed on one's own body, or with others, with married or single persons, with blood-relations, or persons related by marriage, or strangers, with persons of the same or of the opposite sex, or what is worse, with irrational animals. Several of these vices, especially adultery, were in the Old Law forbidden under penalty of death. "If any one commit adultery with the wife of another and defile his neighbor's wife, let them be put to death, both the adulterer and the adulteress."—*Lev. 20: 10.* "If virginity be not found in a damsel, they shall cast her out of the doors of her father's house, and the men of the city shall stone her to death and she shall die, because she hath done a wicked thing in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house."—*Deut. 22: 20, 21.* If the Mosaic Law were in force to-day, many a bride who, on her marriage-day, wears the bridal wreath on her head, would incur the penalty of stoning. And how criminal must the vice of impurity be before God in the New Law since we Christians have sanctified bodies and are members of Christ and temples of the Holy Ghost! For this reason the Apostle wishes us so far removed from every kind of impurity, as not to have such sins even named among us, much less defile ourselves with them. But what a great difference is there between this requirement of the Apostle and the reality! Not only grown persons, but even children, in whom we should expect the innocence of paradise, are frequently initiated in all the mysteries of impurity, and do with themselves and others wicked things which are

an abomination in the eyes of God. Oh, that parents would watch more strictly over their children, and do their best, that they may not be corrupted!

2 *By obscenity, foolish talking, and scurrility.* By *obscenity* we understand, not so much immodesty in dress, looks, and conduct, as in speaking; by *foolish talking* we understand common, coarse jokes which refer to something indecent, and among the indecent cause immoderate laughter; lastly, by *scurrility*, which is to no purpose, we understand sly allusions, just enough to set the mind a-working on evil fancies, words which conceal the poison of impurity, as it were, under flowers, but which frequently cause more mischief than open shamelessness and coarse joking. The Apostle forbids all these sorts of impure discourses, and justly, for—

(a.) *They are in themselves very sinful, because they proceed from a bad heart.* “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of a good treasure bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of an evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.”—*Matt. 12: 34, 35.* He that takes no pleasure in impurity will not let a filthy word pass his lips, and even such as are infected with the vice of impurity are frequently disgusted with obscenities. From this it follows that some of those who speak unchaste words are even more corrupt in heart and more criminal before God, than those unfortunates who commit acts of impurity.

(b.) *They are sinful because they defile and dishonor the tongue, that sanctified member of the human body.* Our tongue was sanctified in baptism, when the priest put blessed salt on it, saying: “Receive the salt of wisdom, may it be to thee a propitiation to eternal life.” And when we go to communion, we receive the most sacred body of Jesus Christ with his most precious blood, soul and divinity on our tongue. What a desecration of the tongue to abuse it by filthy talk! Is this not to sin more grievously than to desecrate the chalice which at mass serves for the consecration of the sacred blood of Jesus Christ?

(c.) *They are particularly sinful on account of the scandal they give.* How comes it that the vice of impurity is so prevalent, and young and old contaminated? Principally from filthy, immodest discourses, for by these the ignorant and innocent receive the knowledge of this vice and the fire of unchaste love is kindled in their hearts; it is impure words and unchaste discourses that little by little banish bashfulness, modesty, and the fear of God, those guardian angels of holy purity, and make people shameless and impious, and open the way to the most shameless actions. “The tongue is indeed a little member and

boasteth great things. Behold how small a fire kindleth a great wood."—*James* 3: 5 One impure word may be the occasion of sin for those who hear it, these in turn corrupt others, and these others others still, thus spreading the evil. Thus it may happen that numberless souls be lost for all eternity owing to a single impure conversation or even word. To those who speak unchastely, the words of Jesus apply: "Woe to the man by whom scandal cometh! He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea."—*Matt.* 18: 6, 7.

Do not forget these words of Jesus. Guard against speaking unchastely before any one—especially before children and innocent persons. Avoid all association with persons who find pleasure in obscene and filthy talk; and if you can not avoid them altogether, show them at least by a serious countenance that you take no pleasure in their obscenity; call to mind the presence of God, and invoke in your hearts the protection of Jesus and Mary. Fathers and mothers, be your words and discourses in all modesty, and allow no unchaste discourse in your house. You must correct and rebuke any one who carries it on in your house. You owe this much to your children.

## PART II.

St. Paul, in the epistle for this day, gives three reasons why we ought to guard ourselves against impurity.

1. *Impurity excludes from heaven:* "*For know you this, and understand, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*" This is the fate of the unchaste; unless they repent in time, they die a miserable death and lose heaven. What a loss! Reflect a moment what heaven is and what joy it offers, in order to understand somewhat the greatness of the loss. How much did Esau regret having sold his birthright to Jacob for a miserable mess of pottage! What sorrow and despair will seize the damned when obliged to say: "I have lost heaven for a vile fleeting lust." A necessary consequence of the exclusion from heaven is eternal damnation, for the adult that does not go to heaven, goes to hell. "To fornicators . . . their portion shall be in the pool burning with fire and brimstone."—*Apoc.* 21: 8. There, in the abyss of hell, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, the unchaste shall find their place of habitation, and suffer every moment pains compared with which all the pains and tortures of this world are as nothing, and throughout eternity they shall be deprived of all hope of ever being redeemed. Oh, you unfortunate slaves of carnal lust, can you hear this without trembling? Shall the remembrance of hell not move you to shake off the base fetters and chains of voluptuousness, and to live chastely.

2. *God hates and punishes impurity.* "Let no man deceive you with vain words. For because of these things cometh the anger of God upon the childre: of unbelief." Many consider impurity no sin, but only a natural necessity, the gratification of which is as lawful as eating and drinking; or at most that it is only a human frailty, on which God will look with indulgence. What error! what delusion! If impurity be no sin, why did God give the sixth and ninth commandments? Peruse the entire Sacred Scriptures, and you shall not find a single passage in which impurity is spoken of as lawful; on the contrary, everywhere it is represented as a vice hateful to God; a vice which is punished not only in the next world, but even in this. Examples: The people in the days of Noah, whom God, on account of the sin of impurity, swept away by the deluge: Sodom and Gomorrah, which, by a rain of fire and brimstone, were destroyed: and David, who, although he repented of his adultery and obtained forgiveness from God, was yet most severely chastised for the same in this life. Now, if God deal even in this world so severely with the unchaste, who will deny that impurity is a grievous sin? And who would not flee from a vice which renders man unhappy for time and eternity?

3. *Impurity is a vice of the Gentiles, wherefore every Christian must detest and avoid it.* "For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord, walk you as the children of the light." In other words, you were once Gentiles and knew neither God nor his holy law. You did then the things after which your flesh lusted, because you knew no better: but now being Christians, you are instructed, and you know that God has strictly forbidden fornication and all uncleanness. Act then according to this knowledge, that you may be able to stand before the judgment seat of God.

#### PERORATION.

Endeavor, then, to walk honestly, decently and chastely, and to do nothing against the chastity of your state of life. Although no *human* eye sees you, yet God sees you. You are afraid of the eyes of man, why not of the eyes of God? Walk in the light. Beware of scurrilous words, unchaste jokes, and immodest discourses. Think of the woe which Jesus pronounced against those who give scandal. Do not burden your souls with the crime of corrupting the innocent; their blood shall be demanded at your hands, and a judgment without mercy shall come upon you if you seduce others, because to them you showed no mercy. If your conscience tell you that you have contaminated yourselves by the vice of impurity, make a sincere and good confession and henceforth lead a life of penance, considering that only the clean of heart shall see God. Amen.

## THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.

GOSPEL. *St. Luke* 11. 14-28. At that time : Jesus was casting out a devil, and the same was dumb ; and when he had cast out the devil, the dumb spoke ; and the multitude admired : but some of them said : He casteth out devils in Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. And others tempting, asked of him a sign from heaven. But he, seeing their thoughts, said to them : Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation, and a house upon a house shall fall. And if Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand ? because you say, that in Beelzebub I cast out devils. Now if I cast out devils in Beelzebub, in whom do your children cast them out ? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I, in the finger of God, cast out devils doubtless the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keepeth his court, those things which he possesseth are in peace. But if a stronger than he come upon him and overcome him, he will take away all his armor wherein he trusted, and will distribute his spoils. He that is not with me, is against me : and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through places without water, seeking rest : and not finding, he saith : I will return into my house whence I came out. And when he is come, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering in they dwell there. And the last state of that man cometh worse than the first. And it came to pass, as he spoke these things, a certain woman from the crowd lifting up her voice, said to him : Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the paps that gave thee suck. But he said : Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.

## 2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

## JESUS CASTS OUT A DEVIL AND JUSTIFIES HIMSELF AGAINST HIS ENEMIES.

The gospel read in the mass of to-day, speaks of a man who was possessed by a devil. Our Lord had compassion on the poor man and delivered him from the devil. Did not all that were witnesses of this expulsion of the devil admire the divine power of Jesus and believe in him as the promised Redeemer of the world ? Far from it, on the contrary, the Scribes and Pharisees took occasion from this miracle to calumniate and blaspheme Jesus in the most malicious manner. Jesus defended himself against them and spoke with such persuasive eloquence, wisdom and power, that a woman in the crowd, lifting up her voice, called the mother blessed that had borne such a son. These in a few words are the contents of the gospel for this day, which we shall consider a little more closely. I divide them into three points,



- I. *Jesus casts out a devil,*  
 II. *He justifies himself against his enemies,*  
 III. *He speaks of the return of the unclean spirit.*

## PART I.

1. *Jesus cast out a devil, and the same was dumb.*

(a.) The devil that Jesus cast out was not dumb, but the man was whose tongue the devil held bound so that he could not speak a word. That the devil can incorporate himself in man, and operate out of him and in him, is a truth which the Sacred Scripture and history most clearly attest.—*Matt.* 4: 24—8: 16; *Mark*, 1: 32; *Acts* 19: 13

(b.) It is also certain that the evil spirits can injure men in their body and temporal goods as far as God permits. Proofs of this are Job, the seven husbands of Sarah, and the lunatic, *Matt.* 17: 14.

(c.) God permits people to be injured by evil spirits, either to punish them for their sins, or to try their virtue. The former was the case with the seven husbands of Sarah, and the latter with Job. In the Lives of the Saints we meet with many examples in which these holy servants of God suffered greatly from evil spirits.

(d.) To protect ourselves against the assaults of the devil, we must avoid all sins, especially impurity and blasphemy. In houses in which impurity is committed, or in which there is much cursing and blaspheming, the devil frequently does a great deal of injury. In such houses the benedictions and exorcisms of the Church prove ineffectual, unless sin and vice be cast out.

(e.) The man was *dumb*. This was, indeed, a deplorable state, yet it had its advantages, for he could commit no sin with his tongue, and moreover had, if he bore his misfortune with patience, an opportunity of paying the penalty due to his sins and of acquiring merits for heaven.

(f.) Far worse is *spiritual dumbness*. To the spiritually dumb belong those who will not speak with God, that is, who do not pray; those who conceal their sins in confession, or their number and circumstances, and lastly, those who keep silence regarding the sins of others which they should denounce and correct; as parents, brothers and sisters. Examine yourselves and see whether you have not been spiritually dumb in one way or another.

2. *And when the devil had been cast out, the dumb man spoke.* What

was it that he spoke first. There can be no doubt that he thanked our Lord and praised him with a loud voice. Do likewise; show yourselves grateful for the many corporal and spiritual benefits which you daily receive from him. The healed man would have acted very sinfully if, instead of thanking Jesus, he had blasphemed him. But this very thing those Christians do, who abuse their body and its members, their health and other temporal goods, in offending God. And there are many such.

3. *And the multitude admired.* The common, illiterate people who were witnesses of the miracle recognized in it the work of God; they believed in Jesus. It was always so. Generally, it was the common people that adhered to Jesus. Three hundred years elapsed before an emperor embraced Christianity. And who are they that now-a-days cling firmly to Jesus and his Church? Again, the common people. Thus the words of Jesus are verified: "The poor have the Gospel preached to them."—*Matt. 11 : 5.* Only he who is humble has a heart susceptible to the grace of faith; the proud despise this grace and walk in imaginary wisdom the ways of error and perdition. Our own times prove this, alas, too well.

## PART II.

1. *Some of them said: He casteth out devils in Beelzebub, the prince of devils.* What did the Scribes and Pharisees do to efface the impression this miracle had made upon those present, and to weaken their faith in Jesus? They misinterpreted the miracle, saying: He has cast out a devil, it is true; not, however, by the power of God, but by the aid of Beelzebub, the prince of devils, with whom he is in compact. This casting out of the devil served the Scribes and Pharisees as a means of lowering him in the estimation of the people, and of rendering him odious. This is envy. If it can not deny what is good in a neighbor, it misrepresents it and when it can do naught else suggests an unworthy motive. Thus the best actions are distorted and made to appear evil. Let this abominable passion of envy never reign in your hearts

Consider that envy destroys the image of God in the soul and imprints the ugly image of the devil. Be well-disposed towards all men, especially towards your immediate neighbors and those who occupy the same station in life that you do; wish them well from your hearts, judge and speak well of them, cover their faults with the mantle of charity and cheerfully do them acts of kindness.

2. *Others tempting, asked of him a sign from heaven.* How great their insolence! They were witnesses of the open miracle which Jesus had just performed on the dumb man. There is also no doubt that

many other miracles of his were known to them, nevertheless they asked of him a sign from heaven. They did not ask this sign of him as a proof of his divine mission or Messianic character in order to believe in him, but rather to tempt, defy and challenge him. Consider that you also tempt God when you present petitions to him which in his wisdom he cannot grant you: for example, if you ask of him to admit you into heaven without doing violence to yourselves, or to be freed from temptations without avoiding the occasions of sin, to obtain the virtues of humility, temperance, patience, prudence, purity, or any other without employing the necessary means. If you ask God for anything, comply with the rules of faith and fulfil the conditions on which the hearing of your prayer depends.

3. Here were two classes of persons in Jesus' presence—the one insisting that the miracle he had just performed was effected only through Beelzebub, the other asking him to perform more wonders, yet to be submitted to their hostile criticism and perverse interpretation. Perhaps some of those latter were only actuated like Herod by curiosity, and wished the Saviour to act the juggler before them. If so, like Herod, they were disappointed. He works no sign from heaven to amuse them. He does not even deign to answer their impertinent proposal. With regard to them and their request he is silent. But to the former class, to those who accused him of working miracles by the power of Beelzebub, he does reply, and in a few words not only repels the accusation, but proves the absurdity of their blasphemy. He said:

(a.) "*Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation, and a house upon a house shall fall. And if Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand, because you say, that in Beelzebub I cast out devils.*" The meaning is this: No kingdom, no family in which union and harmony are wanting, can exist. Just as little could the kingdom of the evil spirits stand if they were in strife one with another. And this would really be the case if I should cast out devils in Beelzebub, the prince of the devils; for Beelzebub would be in strife with the other evil spirits, which strife would cause the downfall and dissolution of their kingdom. But since the evil spirits do not destroy their kingdom, but rather endeavor to preserve and confirm it, there can be no dissension among them, and it is an absurdity to assert that Beelzebub is in compact with me and assists me in casting out devils.

(b.) "*Now if I cast out devils in Beelzebub, in whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.*" According to the record of Flavius Josephus, there were among the Jews those who, by the invocation of the name of God, by the use of some herbs or

even the name of Jesus, cast out devils, or at least asserted that they did so. Alluding to these, Jesus says: If your adherents cast out devils, you attribute it unhesitatingly to the omnipotence of God; how can you deny to me, that I, by the finger of God, that is, by his power, cast out devils? Is it not blind hatred and partiality to acknowledge one and the same action in your friends as a divine work, and in me to brand it as the work of the devil?

How often do passion, pride, prejudice and sensual love bring men to this; that in one man they excuse and sanction what in another they bitterly reprehend and discountenance! Beware of all partiality and "pass a just judgment."—*Jerem.* Parents particularly should avoid in their conduct towards their children even the appearance of partiality; they should treat all alike, for the contrary might draw dreadful consequences after it. Witness: Joseph's brothers.

(c.) With the words: "*But if I, by the finger of God, cast out devils, doubtless the kingdom of God is come upon you.*" Jesus proves to the Jews that he is truly the Messiah, and that he has already founded his kingdom, that is, his Church. It was the task of the promised Redeemer to destroy the kingdom of Satan, that is, the kingdom of error and sin, and to establish in its stead the kingdom of God, to wit, the kingdom of truth and virtue. Now, as he worked against the devil, cast him out and destroyed his influence, he evidently showed himself the Founder of the new kingdom, namely, that of the Messiah and redeemer of the world. This is to-day a palpable sign of the truth and divinity of the holy Catholic Church, that she has power over the devil, casts him out, and destroys his influence. And as no other denomination has the power to do this, it is evident that none of them is the true Church established by Christ.

(d.) "*When a strong man armed keepeth his court, those things which he possesses are in peace. But if a stronger than he come upon him and overcome him, he will take away all his armor wherein he trusted, and will distribute his spoils. He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathered not with me, scattereth.*" The devil, Jesus says, was up to this time the prince of the world and possessed it in peace; he trusted in his armor, *unbelief and sin*, with which he kept the people in his power. But I am far stronger than he, and I shall overcome him. I shall take away his armor, *idolatry and sin*, and through my disciples take from him the nations that served him. Then every one shall see that the devil is not with me, but against me, since he will not gather and convert with me, but scatter, pervert, and drag souls to perdition.

These words of Jesus are being fulfilled for more than eighteen hundred years, and shall be fulfilled without interruption to the end of time. The holy Catholic Church is always in contest with the devil and his

adherents, but always. although only after a struggle more or less severe, she conquers him, and extends her limits farther and farther, and increasing the number of her children from year to year. What a grace that from our infancy we belong to the Catholic Church ! Let us show our gratitude for this grace, by not forgetting that much shall be demanded of him to whom much has been given, and by fulfilling conscientiously our duties as Christians.

## PART VI.

*"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through places without water, seeking rest; and not finding it, he saith: I will return into my house whence I came out. And when he is come, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering in they dwell there. And the last state of that man becometh worse than the first."*

In this passage, in which Jesus speaks of the return of the devil, reference is made, first, to *the Jews*, and secondly, to *relapsing sinners*.

1. By sin, all men had come into the power of the devil; but God chose the Jews for his people and withdrew them from the dominion of the devil; and Satan walked through places without water, that is among the Gentiles. But when these were converted to Christianity, he could not remain among them; *he returned to the house whence he had gone out, namely, to the Jews. He found them swept, to-wit, without faith in Jesus and without obedience to him, and garnished with sanctimoniousness, pride, self-conceit and imaginary justice.* They were a fit dwelling for him; he therefore returned to them, but no longer alone, but with seven other spirits more wicked than himself. The Jews by their obstinate unbelief and perversity offered a commodious dwelling-place, not only for one, but for many evil spirits. By this return of the devil with his companions, the latter state of the Jews became worse than the former—worse than it was before they were ever called to be the chosen people. They now fell into blindness and obstinacy of the intellect, coldness and obduracy of heart. Their conversion to Christianity became almost an impossibility, and in that sad state they remain to this day.

2. What Jesus says here of the Jews, is also applicable to *relapsing sinners*. As long as a man lives in the state of sin, he is in the power of the devil. But if he be converted, the devil must depart from him and surrender dominion over him to the Holy Ghost. But we, let us not believe that the devil gives up the converted man entirely, and cares no more about him; no, he returns, and endeavors to make him relapse and to reduce him again to his power. He succeeds if the

heart of the converted be swept and garnished, that is, if in it all heavenly thoughts and good resolutions have vanished, and vanity and a worldly spirit have settled there. By saying that the devil takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself and enters into the heart of man to dwell there, he declares that the spiritual condition of one, who, having formerly been a sinner, was by God's mercy made penitent, and through penance restored to God's grace and love, but then fell away again, turning his back on God and plunging into his former sins and excesses, is incomparably worse than it was before ever he was withdrawn from sin and given to know the sweets of grace and holy compunction. For he that relapses into his former sins, loses more and more the fear of God, he grows more careless, and by-and-by comes to such a state that he thinks nothing of sin, and finally falls into blindness and obstinacy. Repeated relapses beget a bad habit, which becomes a second nature, and makes a real and lasting conversion almost an impossibility. Such a relapsing sinner, therefore, is in the greatest danger of losing his soul; it is much to be feared that he shall remain impenitent and perish eternally. How true is the word of Jesus!—"The last state of that man cometh worse than the first." Guard yourselves against a relapse into sin. If you have the misfortune to fall into grievous sin, make a good confession at once and walk cautiously, that you may not relapse again.

## PERORATION.

At the conclusion of the gospel the evangelist relates that a woman, full of admiration at what she had heard and seen, cried out that that mother was blessed who had borne and reared such a son. Jesus approved that praise, saying: "Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it," for who ever kept the word of God with a fidelity equal to that of his blessed mother? Truly Mary is blessed, but not so much for the dignity of her maternity as for her fervor in hearing the word of God and keeping it. Behold what value the word of God has! If we love to hear and conscientiously keep it, Jesus will call us blessed, as he did his mother. Amen.

## THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.

## 3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

## CONTRITION.

*"Jesus cast out a devil."—Luke 11: 14.*

The miracle of the casting out of the devil, which, as the gospel for this day informs us, Jesus performed, is to be repeated in a moral sense in all sinners during the Easter time. The devil must be cast out, that the Holy Ghost with his grace may dwell in their hearts. This miracle really takes place when we make a good confession. But what is the principal requisite for a good confession? *Contrition*, which consists in an interior sorrow, with a detestation of the sins committed. It is, among all the parts which belong to the Sacrament of Penance, the most necessary. If contrition were wanting, neither mortal nor venial sin could be forgiven. No sinner has ever yet received the forgiveness of his sins without true contrition.

On *contrition*, the second requisite for the worthy reception of the holy Sacrament of Penance, I shall speak to-day and explain to you,

*I. What qualities it must have in order that our sins may be remitted,*

*II. What we must do in order to obtain true contrition.*

## PART I.

Contrition, that it may obtain for us the remission of sin, must be *interior, universal and supernatural.*

**I. Interior.** That contrition must be interior, is evident from the definition; for it is a sorrow of the soul and a detestation of the sins committed. A merely external manifestation of sorrow and detestation for sins would be hypocrisy, but not contrition. Contrition must be interior, because all sins proceed from the heart. We say nothing wrong without having first willed it; the will, the heart, is always the first to turn away from God and God's law; after that follows the sin in word or deed. If God is to forgive us our sins, he must require, before all else, that our will, which had turned away from him by sin, should, by repenting of it, be turned to him again. The word of God also demands contrition to be interior. "Be converted to me with all your hearts; rend your hearts and not your garments."—*Joel 2: 12, 13* Make to yourselves a new heart

and a new spirit."—*Ezech.* 18: 31. "A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit; a contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."—*Ps.* 50: 19.

It does not suffice to make an act of contrition merely with the mouth, or with words; we must have it in the heart. It is not, however, necessary that the contrition consist in a sensible, feeling sorrow. It suffices that we hate and detest sin above all things, and are ready rather to be deprived of every good and to be afflicted with every evil than to offend God again by a mortal sin.

2. *Universal.* We must be sorry for all the *mortal sins* we have committed. By every mortal sin we turn ourselves entirely away and separate ourselves from God; we say in effect: Though God forbids this under penalty of his eternal displeasure, I care not what he forbids, this I shall do. As in sinning then we deliberately preferred the pleasure or the gain to God, and turned from him to embrace sin, so in repentance we must turn from sin and cast it from us to return to God. In other words we must be sorry for sin, otherwise a union and reconciliation with God can not take place. By every sin we deserve the displeasure and indignation of God; we can not therefore obtain the grace and love of God if we be not sorry for every mortal sin. By every mortal sin we lose sanctifying grace, and the inheritance of heaven: we therefore remain deprived of sanctifying grace and the inheritance of heaven if we have not contrition for every mortal sin. Therefore God says by the prophet: "If the wicked do penance for *all* his sins which he hath committed, and keep *all* my commandments, and do judgment and justice, living he shall live, and shall not die."—*Ezech.* 18: 21.

He therefore who is not sorry for all his mortal sins, makes a bad confession. It is not, however, necessary to make a special act of contrition for each individual mortal sin; it suffices that we be sorry for them altogether, known and unknown. It is advisable, however, to make an act of contrition expressly for any particular sin to which we have been addicted. By so doing our contrition is apt to become more perfect; it will reach to and more thoroughly eradicate that sin, and our resolution of amendment will be laid on firmer and deeper foundations.

Concerning *venial sins*, it is not necessary to be sorry for all of them, or for any one in particular, if accompanied with mortal sin we may receive the Sacrament of Penance validly without any contrition for them. The reason is because venial sins only weaken, but do not entirely destroy sanctifying grace and the love of God. If, therefore, at confession we be sorry only for grievous sins, we receive the Sacrament of Penance validly and worthily. But, if a person has only venial sins



to confess, and should not be sorry for one of them at least, he should make an invalid and sacrilegious confession, because contrition is an essential part of the Sacrament of Penance, and therefore he receives the Sacrament unworthily, who has no contrition.

It is very advisable that persons who, since their last confession, are conscious only of venial sins, especially if it should be doubtful whether they have contrition sufficient for them, should renew their sorrow for a mortal sin previously committed and already confessed, and include it in the confession. If the penitent should not be conscious of having committed even a venial sin since his last confession, he should be obliged to be sorry for a sin already confessed, whether mortal or venial, and confess it, so that the priest would have matter for absolution.

3. *Supernatural.* Contrition is supernatural when we are sorry for our sins, not on account of their natural evil consequences, but from a supernatural motive, because thereby we have offended God and deserved hell. If one were sorry for his sins only from a natural motive, say on account of a temporal loss, or shame, or punishment, or because sin is base and degrading, and unworthy of a rational being, this would be only a *natural sorrow*. Such a sorrow is good in itself, but it is not sufficient to obtain the forgiveness of sins. Examples: King Saul (*I. Kings*, 15: 23, 24), King Antiochus (*I. Mach.* 6: 12, 13, and *II. Mach.* 9. 13). The reason is because those who have only a natural contrition do not hate and detest the sin as such, but only the temporal evils of sin; they are not sorry for having offended God, but only for the temporal evils which they have brought on themselves by sin; and as their heart is not yet averted from evil, God cannot forgive them.

Alas! there are many sinners who have only natural contrition.

Supernatural contrition again is either perfect or imperfect.

(a.) Contrition is perfect when we detest sin more than all other evils for the sole reason that thereby we have offended God, the sovereign good. Therefore, if our contrition be perfect, we hate and detest our sins not because they are hateful and detestable in themselves, or because we have thereby lost heaven and deserved hell, but because by sin we have offended God, the sovereign and most amiable good. Although we have no reason to fear eternal damnation for our sins, we should nevertheless hate and detest them. Ingratitude to God the Father, who loved us from eternity, who brought us out of nothing, and still loves us as only the Almighty Creator can love his noblest work; ingratitude to God the Son, whose whole life and death is the story of his love for us written by his own divine hand—ingratitude to God the Holy Ghost, the sanctifier of our souls, he who enlightens the minds and moves the hearts of the faithful, who has bestowed so many heavenly

favors upon ourselves, and who every moment preserves us in the faith, the hope, and charity of God. This ingratitude to God the Eternal Three-in-One is the underlying motive of perfect contrition.

(b.) Contrition is *imperfect* when the fear of hell or the loss of heaven or the heinousness of sin urge us to detest sin above all things and to offend God no more. He who has this imperfect contrition, is also sorry, as the one who has a perfect one for having offended God; he hates and detests his sins also from the bottom of his heart, but not principally because he has offended God, the sovereign good, but because he has merited the displeasure of God, lost heaven, and deserved hell. If he had not that fear of God's retributive justice, he would not hate and detest his sins above all things, for the love of God is yet too weak within him to be capable itself of producing true contrition in his heart.

Perfect contrition evidently is better than imperfect; the latter cleanses the soul from all sin only in connection with the Sacrament of Penance; the former, on the contrary, justifies even without the Sacrament if we have an earnest desire to confess.—*Counc. Trent, Sess. 24: 4.*

## PART II

In order to obtain a true supernatural contrition, we must

1. *Fervently petition God for his grace, and*
2. *Earnestly consider what faith teaches of the malice of sin and its evil consequences.*

(ad. 1.) As for everything salutary for the welfare of the soul, so for true supernatural contrition we need the grace of God. But because God wishes to be asked for his graces, at least for those subsequent graces by means of which we are saved, we must pray to God to give us the grace of true contrition. The Saints did so. St. Charles Borromeo every year entered into a spiritual retreat of at least eight days, in order to prepare himself for his annual confession. On the day on which he made it he spent several hours on his knees, in order to ask God for the grace of true contrition, and yet St. Charles had scarcely a venial sin to confess. We shall therefore do well, if, not only at the beginning we invoke the Holy Ghost, but also after the examination of conscience, we beg God to give us the grace of true contrition.

(ad. 2.) Let us consider,

(a.) *The malice of sin.* God is the king of heaven and earth. A subject who rebels against his king deserves death; what does the sinner deserve who raises the standard of rebellion against his God, and

with a barefaced impudence says to him: I will not serve Thee. God is goodness itself toward us and showers upon us numberless benefits; is it not the basest ingratitude towards him to return evil for his goodness and benefits? What a horrible crime did the Jews commit when they crucified Jesus? What does the sinner do? He renews the crime of the Jews, as often as he commits a mortal sin, for he that sins crucifies Jesus anew.—*Heb. 6: 6.*

(*b.*) *The evil consequences of sin.* Consider how severely God punished the rebellious angels, whom he cast out of heaven into the abyss of hell. Adam and Eve, whom, with their whole posterity, he chastised with his indignation and tribulations of every sort; the people in the days of Noah, whom he drowned in the deluge; the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, whom he destroyed by fire and brimstone. Let us consider what we lose by sin. We lose by every mortal sin *sanctifying grace*, that grace purchased for us by the blood of Jesus; we lose all our previous merits as well as the supreme prerogative obtained at our baptism, of being children of God, and heirs with his own divine Son to the kingdom of heaven. What a loss! Lastly, let us consider what awaits the sinner. Hell. Hell with all its pains that shall never end. Oh, who would not, considering all these things, hate and detest sin above all things!

#### PERORATION.

Retain in your memory what I have told you to-day on contrition. Do all you can to obtain with the grace of God true supernatural contrition. Without contrition confession is useless—worse than useless. Without contrition, true and supernatural, no sinner can be saved. All of them that have ever been saved, have been saved by contrition, while, on the other hand, every soul in hell to-day is there for want of contrition. Let us then follow in the footsteps of the true penitents, excite ourselves at every confession—nay, daily, to a hearty sorrow for our sins, that God may forgive us here and give us as penitents a place in his kingdom hereafter.

## THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.

## 4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

## THE SANCTIFICATION OF LENT.

*"Jesus cast out a devil, and the same was dumb."—Luke 11: 14.*

The gospel for this day speaks of a demoniac, whose tongue the devil held bound, so that he could not speak a word. The Divine Saviour cast out the devil and healed the poor man of his dumbness. In this unfortunate man the Church shows us the wretched condition of a man who by sin falls into the slavery of Satan, and exhorts us, like the dumb man, to have recourse to Jesus in order to be delivered from the power of the evil spirit, and to have our souls healed by him. Let us obey the admonition of our affectionate mother, and employ the present Lent for our reconciliation with God, for it is a time of penance. For this reason, at the beginning of it, our heads were sprinkled with ashes, and with earnest words we were called upon to bring forth fruits worthy of penance.

The forty days' fast being a time of penance, the question is, *by what exercises must we sanctify it?* I answer this question by saying we must sanctify it—

- I. *By corporal, and*
- II. *By spiritual fasting.*

## PART I.

The corporal fast during Lent consists—

1. *In abstaining on certain days from flesh meat.* In early times the Christians abstained, during the whole season of Lent, from flesh meat, and even from such food as came from animals, such as milk, butter, cheese and eggs. This manner of fasting lasted till the middle of the fourteenth century. In the year 1344 Pope Clement VI. made some mitigation and allowed the use of milk, butter and eggs. The faithful, however, made use of this privilege only in case of necessity, and even then, when they could not keep the Lenten fast in all its austerity, they performed in place of it other good works; they built churches, made pious bequests, and gave alms.

(b.) In our days this rigorous precept of fasting is no longer in force. The Church, accommodating herself to the circumstances of the

times, allows the use of flesh meat during the whole season of Lent, with the exception of a few days—namely, Wednesdays and Fridays, the Saturday of Ember week, and the last four days. Milk, butter, cheese and eggs may also be used, but fish and flesh meat at one and the same meal are forbidden. According to the explanation of Benedict XIV., this prohibition of using flesh meat and fish at one and the same meal is binding under mortal sin, and extends even to the Sundays during Lent.

(c.) Persons outside the Church sometimes taunt us, saying that it is only just the same to eat flesh meat as our Lenten diet. Granted, but what of it? I may get as fat on salmon as on beef; I may like my Friday's dinner even better than any other; what of that either? Why do I not eat meat then? Because the Church, without consulting me, and centuries before I was born, prohibited to her children the use of flesh meat on certain days. And her children have observed the law, and because I am a child of the Church I, too, shall observe the law. There is no question as to the alimentary or any other value of the meats. I only know that a law of the Church forbids flesh meat on a certain day. Then, either away with the Church on that day, or away with the meat. "If (any man) will not hear the Church let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican."—*Matt.* 18: 17

The Church, however, does not forbid without good reason the use of flesh meat on certain days. Flesh meat, without doubt, is a somewhat coarse, sensual food. Nations that use flesh meat are ruder and more inclined to dissipation than those that do not use it. In the beginning men ate only Lenten food.—*Gen.* 1: 29. It was only after the deluge, when mankind had begun to degenerate, that God allowed them to eat meat.—*Gen.* 9: 2, 3. Nourishment from plants is the nutriment of innocence; flesh meat is the food of sensuality and ferocity. The Church, by forbidding us the use of flesh meat on certain days, wishes to call to our mind the happy state of innocence in which man lived in paradise, where, because he was innocent, he used innocent food taken from plants, and to admonish us that we should return to that happy state in which the spirit ruled over the flesh.

2. *That we take only one full meal, Sundays excepted.*

(a.) The Christians of the first ages observed this ecclesiastical ordinance very exactly. They ate nothing during the whole day, and took their meal only in the evening, after the setting of the sun. Nor did they drink water, unless there was a necessity. A council at Aix-la-Chapelle declares: "Only when necessity requires it, on account of hard labor or weakness, is it allowed to drink."

(b.) This custom of fasting, that is, to remain fasting till after sunset,

existed in the Church for twelve hundred years. It was not till the thirteenth century that there was a departure from the ancient austerity, when the full meal was allowed to be taken at three o'clock in the afternoon, and in the fourteenth century, at noon. This ordinance the Church has adhered to till now, hence we are allowed daily during the forty days of Lent to take a full meal about noon. There is a small collation allowed in the evening, which is not to exceed the fourth part of an ordinary meal. The following persons are exempted from the obligation of fasting: young persons under twenty-one years of age, and old persons over sixty years of age, the sick, pregnant women, and those giving suck to infants, persons obliged to hard labor, and all those who, through weakness, can not fast without great prejudice to their health.

Herein consists the corporal fast, which the Church during Lent enjoins on us under the penalty of mortal sin. The examples of the Saints of the Old and the New Testament ought to encourage us to this fast. In the Old Law we read of Moses, David, Elias, Judith, Esther, the Machabees, that they fasted, and by this exercise obtained of God special graces. Jesus himself fasted forty days and forty nights in the desert; the Apostles, and Christians of all times, imitated his example. And if we read the lives of the Saints, we shall not find one who did not practice not only the prescribed, but also voluntary fasting. If, therefore, we wish to be good Catholics, we must conscientiously keep the ecclesiastical precept of fasting.

## PART II.

The spiritual fast by which we are to sanctify the forty days' fast, consists in—

### 1. *Renouncing sin.*

(a.) Fasting is good and pleasing to God, and yet unprofitable, unless we join to it a penitential life. Pope Leo the Great says: "Without fruit we deprive the body of food, if we do not at the same time turn the heart from sin." We read that the Jews kept a great fast, but God regarded it not, wherefore they complained, saying: "Why have we fasted, and thou hast not regarded, have we humbled our souls, and thou hast not taken notice?" And God answered: "Behold, in the day of your fast your own will is found, you fast for debates and strife, and strike with the fist wickedly. Do not fast as you have done. Loose the bonds of your wickedness."—*Is.* 58: 3, 4, 6. The Scribes and Pharisees also fasted fruitlessly. On account of their ambition and malice Jesus declared to them, that they had already received their reward.

(b.) That our fast may please God, we must renounce sin. The proud man must humble himself and give God the honor of any good that he may fancy himself to possess; the avaricious man must lay aside his inordinate desire for the goods of this world, nor set his heart and affections upon them, but give alms; the unchaste must renounce his sinful company and all carnal desires, and live chastely. We must all fast from sin. Some of you may be dispensed from the rigorous observance of Lent, but you can not be dispensed from the obligation of doing penance and abstaining from sin. The Church expects this kind of fast from us all, for she thus prays: "Grant, O Lord, that thy people who chastise their flesh by abstinence from food, may by hunger and thirst after justice learn to fast from sin."

*2. Mortifying all inordinate inclinations.*

(a.) As long as we do not yield to evil inclinations, which are a consequence of original sin, they are not sinful, but if we permit ourselves to be governed by them, they become a fruitful source of sin. How grievously did the Scribes and Pharisees sin, because they did not bridle their ambition: Judas, because he did not put away his avarice; David, who banished not the rising impure desires! If we neglect the mortification of our evil inclinations, all corporal fasting is without value. Hence St. Chrysostom says: "What does it profit to fast, if the irascible do not become meek, the envious peaceable, the avaricious do not desist from their passion and give alms to the poor, if the voluptuous do not become chaste, and the ambitious give up vain honor."

(b.) Examine then to-day the evil inclinations which draw you most forcibly to sin; and having found them out, use all diligence to root them up during Lent. This is the fast most pleasing to God. A certain hermit in Thebais had a disciple whom he daily instructed in the spiritual life. He gave him this instruction every evening, after which he dismissed him to go to rest. One day some people of the world came to him, with whom he discoursed on spiritual things until evening. When they had gone, he began with his disciple the usual exercise. Being very much fatigued, the old man was overpowered by sleep. The disciple was waiting till his spiritual father should awake and dismiss him. But when the old man slept till after midnight, the disciple was tempted to awake his master or to leave quietly and go to rest. Seven times he had this temptation, but each time he resisted it. Finally, long after midnight, the old man awoke and dismissed his pupil. When he afterwards prayed, he had a vision in which he saw a splendid seat and on it seven crowns. Upon his question, whose these crowns were, an angel told him that they belonged to his disciple, who had merited them by a sevenfold self-denial. You can

do nothing better and more meritorious during Lent than to exercise yourselves in mortification. As often as you banish an inordinate inclination or sinful desire, you gain a crown, which the Lord will give you on the day of judgment.

3. *Performing good works with zeal.*

(a.) Heaven is a reward, which is given only to those who have worked diligently in the vineyard of the Lord. "Every tree that yieldeth not good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire."—*Matt.* 3: 10. Against that servant who buried his talent was the terrible judgment pronounced: "The unprofitable servant cast into exterior darkness."—*Matt.* 25: 30. The bridegroom said to the foolish virgins who had their lamps, but no oil, that is, faith but no good works: "I know you not."

(b.) If, therefore, you have heretofore been negligent, redouble your zeal during this holy season in order to make up for the past. Pray and meditate, read spiritual books, listen to the word of God, receive the Sacraments frequently, perform some of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, according to your means and opportunities, offer your labors to God, and bear patiently the hardships and tribulations of life. This zeal in good works will crown your corporal fast, and render you worthy of God's grace and love.

PERORATION.

You know now how you ought to sanctify the forty days' fast. Be not content merely with the corporal fast, but practice also the spiritual, by renouncing sin, by bridling your inordinate inclinations, and by performing good works. "Begin, then," as St. Leo says, "the holy days of Lent with pious devotion and render yourselves worthy of the mercy of God by works of mercy. Extinguish the fire of anger, blot out hatred, love concord and peace, and anticipate one another in works of humility. Masters, be just to your servants and subjects. Put a stop to the desire of revenge, forget injuries and offenses, let severity be changed into mildness, indignation into good will, and strife into peace." If you unite your corporal with your spiritual fast and thus sanctify the holy season of Lent, you shall have reason to hope that it will be to you a time of grace and salvation. Amen.



## THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.

## 5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

THE MAID-SERVANT, SWEEPING THE HOUSE WITH A BROOM, A PATTERN  
FOR PENITENTS.

*"When the devil is come, he finds the house swept."—Luke 11: 25.*

With the first day of Lent begins the Easter time during which we must all, in accordance with the precept of the Church, receive the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist. She calls this duty to our mind by the two gospels which are read for us on this and on next Sunday. The gospel for this day, speaking of the casting out of the devil, refers to holy confession and the Sacrament of Penance; the gospel for next Sunday, the narrative of the wonderful multiplication of bread, refers to holy communion. May God grant that we all during the Easter time receive these Sacraments worthily! Our Lord, in the gospel, speaks of a house that has been swept. You know what a girl does when she cleans the house, or when she, as we commonly say, sweeps. You must do the same when you make your Easter confession. I propose to you to-day the example of a girl as she sweeps the house, to show you how you must act in order to make a good Easter confession.

## PART I.

1. Before the girl begins to sweep, she inspects the dirt and dust which is to be removed with the broom. This preliminary inspection is necessary, for without it she would not know where the filth is that is to be removed. What she does, you must also do when you go to confession; you must begin the business with a diligent scrutiny of your interior, or in other words, with a good careful examination of conscience. And why? Because without such an examination of conscience you will not be able to know properly the state of your soul; and consequently you should be incapable of making an entire confession, and equally incapable of making a thorough and sincere amendment of your life; because, for sins which you do not know, you can not be sorry, neither can you confess them, nor, as regards such, make any particular resolutions of amendment. Hence you see the absolute necessity of this close examination of conscience to begin with.

2. Just as the girl moves tables, chairs, and other articles of furniture which stand on the floor to one side, in order to discover the hid-

den dust and to be able to get at it with the broom, so must we act at our examination of conscience, removing everything that might stand in the way of our coming at a full knowledge of our sins. Such obstacles are—

(a.) *Carelessness and negligence in the examination of conscience.* As the validity of confession, and consequently our eternal salvation, depends on a good examination of conscience, this examination is obviously a most important business, and one to which we must devote the necessary attention. Persons who lead careless lives and go seldom, perhaps only once a year or so, to confession, must naturally devote considerable time to this work of examining their conscience. If they get through with the business carelessly and in a few minutes, they certainly expose themselves to the danger of overlooking sins which they should confess, and consequently of confessing invalidly.

(b.) *Self-love.* This must necessarily be removed, because it covers the filth of sins, or at least prevents them from being seen in their proper light. It suggests: This is no sin, you need not be disquieted about that, you need not confess this thing or that, at all. And these suggestions may be in regard to matters that are grievously sinful and that must be confessed if our confession is not to be a sacrilegious one. Again it is self-love that infuses false shame into the penitent, and makes him conceal a sin, or so palliate it as to make it appear altogether different from what it is in reality. I exhort you to examine your conscience in the light of faith sincerely and diligently.

## PART II.

1. The girl, having inspected the places that are to be swept, does not begin at once to sweep, but first sprinkles some water. Why does she do this? Because it is necessary; if she would not do so, the dust would rise in clouds and settle everywhere, and the last state of the room would become worse than the first. Such a sprinkling is also necessary at confession, if we wish God to forgive us our sins. Thus David sprinkled, who said of himself: "Every night I will wash my bed; I will water my couch with my tears."—*Ps. 6: 7.* Mary Magdalen, who "began to wash his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head."—*Luke 7: 38.* Peter, who after having denied the Lord, "went out and wept bitterly."—*Luke 22: 62.* We must bewail our sins, if not with external, at least with internal tears, that is, with true sorrow of the heart. Without contrition no valid confession, and no forgiveness of sin, is possible. How much do some deceive themselves who believe that their confessions are good, providing they have never knowingly concealed a sin! If you

confess your sins in the most minute manner, your confession is fruitless, if true contrition be wanting. Instead of obtaining forgiveness in the confessional, you but add to your other sins that of making a bad and sacrilegious confession.

2. The girl is anxious to sprinkle *all the spots* where filth is; if she should leave filthy spots unsprinkled, there would be a great deal of dust at the sweeping, which would settle everywhere. In like manner we must sprinkle the filthy spots of our hearts; that is, we must repent of all the sins which we have committed, at least of all mortal sins, for if we had not contrition for every mortal sin, our confession would be invalid. Why? (Explain.) Be careful, then, that at every confession you be sorry at least for all mortal sins.

3. The servant uses *clean* water for sprinkling, for if she should take dirty or foul water, she would only dirty the floor more and spread a bad odor. Our contrition must resemble pure water; we must be sorry for our sins, not from selfish and natural, but from pure and supernatural motives. If one repents of his sins only on account of some temporal loss, temporal shame or punishment, his contrition is of no value, and does not entitle him to forgiveness. We must be sorry for our sins on account of God, because we have offended him, lost his love and grace, and deserved punishment. Ask God earnestly at every confession to grant you the grace of a true, supernatural contrition, and for this end consider the baseness and the evil consequences of sin.

### PART III.

Now, when sweeping, the girl takes a firm hold of the broom. You must do the same as often as you go to confession, but especially at your Easter confession, you must make—

*A strong and firm purpose of amendment.*

(a.) *A strong purpose*, which consists in your firmly resolving to avoid at least *all mortal sins, as also every proximate occasion of sin*. Where such a purpose is wanting there is no forgiveness of sin. Ah! how many confess without such a purpose! They confess merely to confess, but not to amend their lives. They are not resolved not to offend God, at least by mortal sin; they have favorite sins, deeply rooted habitual sins which they never resolve to give up. How great is the number of those who even at Easter confess unworthily for this reason! You must also be resolved to avoid the proximate occasion of sin. What does that mean? Enumeration of such occasions: familiarity with persons of the opposite sex, intimate friendship and company with irreligious, bad

people, bad society and houses, sinful enjoyments, etc. That is difficult, you will say. I grant it; but it must be done, for Christ says: "If thy hand, or thy foot, scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee. For it is better for thee, maimed and lame, to enter into the kingdom of God, than, having two hands and two feet, to be cast into hell-fire."—*Matt.* 18: 8, 9. Think of the fire of hell, which you can not escape, unless you give up the proximate occasion of sin.

(b.) *A firm purpose.* Be resolved never again to offend God. For this end you ought daily to renew the resolution which you made at your confession, that it may remain living and active. Many neglect this, and as a consequence relapse soon after their confession back into their former sins. Do not forget the promise and resolution made at your confession, but renew it daily, especially in every temptation, that your amendment may be lasting.

#### PART IV.

1. After those preliminaries, the girl begins the sweeping. She handles the broom dexterously, and there is no nook or corner into which the broom does not go in order to clean it.

Take the active maid for a pattern, and confess sincerely. Drag *all* your sins to the light, and in a spirit of humility and with contrition of heart, accuse yourself of them in simple and clear language. This is absolutely necessary for the attainment of forgiveness and grace. St. Augustine says: "Let no one say, I confess to God alone in secret. It is enough that he who is to pardon me knows the sorrow of my heart." If it were so, Christ would not have said: "What you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven." For what purpose would he have committed the keys to the Church? Therefore it is not enough to confess to God; we must also confess to those who have received from him the power of loosing and binding.

2. That servant who should allow filth to remain here and there, or who, instead of throwing out the accumulated dirt, should conceal it in a corner, or hide it somewhere that it may not be noticed, is certainly not a good servant, nor would she deserve any praise from her mistress. In like manner, those penitents who, instead of cleansing their conscience by a sincere confession, conceal a sin out of fear or shame, do their work ill. He who does this knows well that even if he leave the confessional absolved, he has confessed sacrilegiously, and if he die in that state that he shall be damned for ever. Oh, be candid and sincere in your confessions, never conceal a sin, be it ever so grievous and heinous. It is better for you not to confess at all, even on your death-bed, than knowingly and willingly to conceal anything

that ought to be confessed. Reasons why all should confess candidly.

#### PART V.

1. The girl, after sweeping the house, takes a cloth and wipes the dust from the tables, chairs, and other articles of furniture, in order to clean everything as completely as possible. The same must be done in the cleansing of the heart. After we have confessed and have received the priest's absolution, the principal cleaning is done, the sins, together with their eternal punishment, are remitted, but *temporal* punishments remain, just as after sweeping the house some dust remains. We must remove these temporal punishments by the diligent performance of the penance enjoined on us by the confessor, as the cleanly and careful girl wipes the dust from the furniture. Perform, then, diligently the penance enjoined after every confession. If a daily penance be enjoined, perform it every day at a certain time for fear of forgetting it, and renew every time you perform your penance the good resolutions you have formed to avoid carefully the sins confessed. In this way the penance becomes not only a means for the expiation of the temporal punishments due to sin, but also an excellent aid to a permanent amendment of life.

2. If the servant, in the cleansing of the house, notice a cobweb, she removes it, and if she catch the spider, she kills it, so that it can weave no more webs. Something of the same nature remains to be done after confession. You must avoid the *dangers and occasions of sin and employ the means for penance and amendment*. For this end follow the advice of the confessor, practice prayer and meditation on eternal truths, and receive the Sacraments as often as possible.

#### PERORATION.

When you go to confession at Easter, or at any other time, think of the servant that sweeps the house, whom I have proposed to you to-day as an example. What she does when sweeping, you must do when you go to confession. Examine your conscience carefully, make an act of true, perfect contrition for all your sins, together with a firm purpose never more to offend God; confess your sins candidly and sincerely, and after confession and absolution perform your penance. By doing so, you shall make a good confession, and with souls cleansed from sin, reconciled with God, and beautified with sanctifying grace, the blessing, and care, and love of your heavenly Father will follow you in your daily duties, and fit you more and more every day to be received by him at last into the kingdom of his glory. Amen.

## THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.

## 6. MORAL SKETCH.

## THE EVIL OF RELAPSE.

*"The last state of that man becometh worse than the first."—Luke 11: 26.*

The fourth precept of the Church reads: *"To confess our sins at least once a year, and to receive WORTHILY the Blessed Eucharist at Easter or within the time appointed."* In our parish, thank God, there will be only very few, if any, who will not observe this precept of the Church. But how great will be the number of those whose hearts the unclean spirit, with seven other worse spirits, will again take possession of, so that their last state shall become worse than the first? And with what Christians shall this be the case? With those who, after the reception of the Sacraments, do not persevere in virtue, but relapse into their former sins.

On this so widely spread, and at the same time so fatal an evil, a relapse, I intend to speak to-day, and to show you—

*I. Its cause,*

*II. Its consequences.*

## PART I.

I do not speak to-day of the relapse into lesser faults, into venial sins, for even fervent Christians who are solicitous for their salvation, can not always, without a special grace, keep themselves entirely undefiled. If we do not commit these faults carelessly, but rather humble ourselves before God for them, and endeavor to amend them, they do us no particular injury. Neither do I speak of relapses into extraordinary and unusual sins, which happen very rarely, and then only on account of some unfortunate circumstance, for such relapses are generally followed by a speedy and lasting amendment. I shall speak only of relapses into those mortal sins which, sad to say in a Christian congregation, must be described as ordinary, and to the commission of which so many return after their confession.

Let us see the principal causes of these relapses.

*1. One of the principal causes of relapse is that there was no real and sincere conversion at all at the time of confession.*

(a.) There are many who go to confession without being earnestly re-

solved to quit their sinful life. Such penitents are often numerous at Easter time. They confess merely to comply with the letter of the law, so as not openly to fall under the excommunication of the Church, or because their parents or superiors wish them to do so, or because they can not easily evade the obligation without attracting attention. What is to be thought of such confessions! They are generally invalid and sacrilegious, and, of course, not followed by any amendment of life. For how can those sinners be expected to amend their lives, who at their confession are devoid even of the will to amend. No one need wonder that such persons after Easter sin as frequently and grievously—nay, perhaps more frequently and grievously than before! It is much to be feared that the Easter confessions will become for many the very cause of their damnation.

(b.) Others are not in their confessions exactly impenitent; they have a kind of sorrow for their sins, and make resolutions of amendment, but they lack the fervor of true repentance; they do not hate and detest their sins above all things; they can not resolve rather to lose house and home, liberty and life, than to offend God by mortal sin. Very little reliance can be placed on such. Can you expect of them a lasting amendment? Certainly not. As soon as a violent temptation assails them, they waver and stagger in virtue, and relapse into the old sins.

Reflect, and see whether this want of real repentance in your confessions was not the cause of your so soon falling back into sin. If you find it to be so, in God's name I exhort you to rise from your deplorable state, and prepare to make this Easter's confession the great turning point for the better in your spiritual life.

2. Another cause of relapse is *not avoiding the occasion of sin*.

(a.) Every man is by nature more inclined to evil than to good, and has some difficulty in controlling his passions and keeping his soul free from sin. Now, if we expose ourselves imprudently to the occasion of sin, the temptation becomes stronger, because two enemies, an interior and exterior, assault the heart, and extraordinary grace will be required to preserve us from sin. And yet this extraordinary grace, though certainly necessary, can not be hoped for, because we expose ourselves to danger of sin presumptuously and without necessity. "He that loves danger shall perish in it."—*Eccles.* 13

(b.) This is particularly true of the *proximate occasion*; not to avoid which when we can avoid it, is as much as to be willing to sin again. Hence St. Augustine says: "To love the proximate occasion of sin, and to fall into sin, are one and the same thing." There are many

penitents who are not willing to give up the proximate occasion of sin. To this class belong single persons keeping sinful company, drunkards, gamblers, spendthrifts; these regularly after their confessions relapse into their former sins, because they do not extricate themselves from the occasion. For this reason confessors are expressly forbidden to absolve penitents who are not willing to avoid the proximate occasion of sin; absolution is to be withheld till the occasion is given up, because otherwise no amendment could be expected. Some penitents promise the confessor that they will give up the proximate occasion of sin; but when they are persons who have made such a promise several times before and never kept it, absolution must be deferred, notwithstanding their promise, till they have given proofs of their repentance by really giving up the dangerous occasion.

It is therefore as unjust as it is foolish to inveigh against confessors, and to blaspheme when they do not absolve habitual sinners at once; they have their rules, which they can not violate without doing an injury to their own souls and to the souls of their penitents.

3. *A third cause of relapse is the neglect of the means of amendment.* I shall mention the principal means.

(a.) *Watchfulness*, according to the word of Christ: "Watch, that you enter not into temptation."—*Matt. 26: 41*. We must watch over our thoughts, emotions, and inclinations, in order that, if they would entice us to evil, we may stand ready to combat and suppress them; we must watch over dangers coming from without, in order to perceive them in time and to guard ourselves against them. He that omits this watchfulness resembles a sleeping sentinel who is surprised by the enemy and killed. Many Christians fall more and more into the snares of Satan because they do not watch, especially over their exterior senses and their surroundings.

(b.) *Prayer*. "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation." We of ourselves are much too weak to overcome the enemies of our salvation; we need the grace of God for that. But the means of obtaining the grace of God, especially the grace to overcome all temptation, is prayer. For this reason every confessor exhorts to prayer. But many penitents do not comply with this admonition; they neglect prayer, or pray without any devotion, or they do not pray in the time of temptation; what wonder then that they relapse after confession.

(c.) *Walk in the presence of God*. If we wish to keep from sin, we must have God before our eyes. Example: Joseph of Egypt, who said: "How can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God."—*Gen. 39: 9*. Susanna, who, full of courage, said: "I am straitened



on every side, for if I do this thing, it is death to me, and if I do it not, I shall not escape your hands. But it is better for me to fall into your hands without doing it, than to sin in the sight of the Lord."—*Dan.* 13: 22, 23. But how many Christians in the pressure of business and the tumult of the world forget God and the earnest truths of our holy religion, and the consequence is that they become careless and live as if there were neither heaven nor hell.

(d.) *The frequent renewal of good resolutions.* In order not to become fatigued or worn out in an arduous business, it is necessary to urge ourselves to it from time to time by strong resolutions. If we should omit such resolutions, there is much fear that we should yield to the temptation of weariness, and shirk or give up the business. The same is true of the business of our salvation, which is a very laborious and wearisome one. In this business we must daily make good resolutions, strong and particular resolutions too especially morning and evening, and in every temptation, in order to persevere in virtue. A great many penitents do not do this. They soon forget the resolutions which they have made at their confessions, wherefore they grow careless and relapse into their former sins.

(e.) Finally, *the frequent reception of the holy Sacraments.* By frequent confession we learn to know the malice and wickedness of sin, conceive a more profound detestation of it, and receive particular grace to overcome temptations. St. Chrysostom calls holy communion that wonderful food which changes the most timid into a lion and makes the devil tremble, and the Council of Trent calls it an antidote which frees us from daily faults and preserves us from mortal sins.—*Sess* 13: *Cap* 2 *de Euch.* But many, especially habitual sinners, confess and communicate very seldom, perhaps once or twice a year, and this is the reason why they always relapse into their former sins.

## PART II.

*What are the consequences of a relapse?* I shall mention only three:

1. *The loss of the fear of God.* A certain man, seeing a lion for the first time, was seized with such violent terror that he trembled like a leaf. He was greatly frightened the second and the third time, but, by-and-by, his fear decreased, and finally he laughed at his first timidity. It is so with the relapsing sinner. After the first sin his conscience is aroused, the thought: "Thou hast grievously offended God, lost his grace and heaven, and if thou die in this state thou shalt be lost forever." fills him with terror and robs him of all peace. But if he frequently relapse into the same sin, these salutary emotions of fear become much weaker, and by-and-by he remains as quiet after every relapse as

if he had not the least cause to fear Unfortunate man! he feels secure in sin, he laughs and is merry on the brink of the precipice The words of the Holy Ghost apply to him: "The wicked man, when he is come into the depths of sin, contemneth."—*Prov* 18 3. Examples from life: the impure, drunkards, gamblers, cursers, blasphemers, who always relapse into their old sins without being in the least disturbed. Hence St. Augustine says: 'Sins, even great and horrible, as soon as they have become a habit, are looked upon as little or no sins at all, this goes so far that it seems not necessary for one to conceal them any more, but to boast of them and make them notorious.' Ah, how fearful is the state of the sinner who has lost all fear of God, all fear of the divine justice That man can hardly be converted. "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord" (*Prov*. 1. 7), and all such fear that sinner has impiously and defiantly cast aside.

2. The second consequence that frequently follows relapse into sin is that the *relapse becomes the origin of a habit of sin*. What one frequently does becomes a habit This is particularly true of sin, which soon becomes a habit, because man is naturally inclined to evil The habit becomes so much the stronger, the more frequently the relapse into sin occurs, and this habit finally becomes a second nature, as it were, so that a true and lasting conversion, if not absolutely impossible, is at least very improbable.

(a) The *Sacred Scripture* teaches this: "A young man, according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it."—*Prov*. 22 6 "If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots, you also may do well, when you have learned evil."—*Jer*. 13: 23. "His bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth, and they shall sleep with him in the dust."—*Job* 20: 11.

(b.) The *holy Fathers* teach this. St. Jerome says: "The evil does not become so strong by nature that it seems to be changed into nature, but by the frequent habit and the love of sin" St. Chrysostom says: "Great is the tyranny of the habit, yea, it is so great that it compels as well as nature." St. Bernard: "The frequent repetition of sin begets the habit; the habit, the necessity; the necessity, the impossibility; the impossibility, despair; and despair, damnation."

(c.) *Experience*. Many who are addicted to drunkenness, impurity, gambling, cursing, etc., frequently bewail their wretched condition, they sigh and moan: Oh, that I were once again free from this wretched habit! They sometimes make an attempt at reforming, but in vain; the bad habit becomes daily stronger, and reduces them to the old slavery. A priest once tried to convert a voluptuous man and bring

him back to a sense of duty. The sinner was moved to tears, which he freely shed, but while weeping and sobbing, he spoke the awful words: "And if you should open hell for me and should make me see the devils ready to receive me, I should not be able to abstain from my habitual sin at the first opportunity that would present itself, not even if I knew for certain, that immediately after the commission of it, I should die and my soul be plunged into hell." Oh, the terrible strength of a bad habit!

3. *Frequently final impenitence.* Relapses repeated for a long series of years—nay, often the greater part of life, bring the sinner to such a pass that he gives up all hope of conversion, lives and dies in sin. This impenitence has its cause—

(a.) *In the blindness of the understanding.* Sin has this peculiarity, that it blinds man the more, the more frequently it is committed and the longer it lasts. St. Eusebius says: "The more one sins, the less he knows his sins." Witness, the Sodomites, who, in consequence of their continual vicious life, were so blinded that they believed themselves more just than Lot, therefore they rejected his warning with angry words, saying: "Thou camest to us as a stranger, was it to be a judge?"—*Gen 19: 9*. St. Augustine, writing on this passage, says: "So far had it come then with the habit of this abominable vice, that the Sodomites considered it a virtue, and he who tried to prevent it was rebuked more than he who committed it." It is so in our days with the voluptuous, the drunkards, cursers, blasphemers, gamblers and others who sin almost continuously, or upon all occasions. You may admonish them with all kindness, or with earnestness and severity; you may hold up to them the joys of heaven and the torments of hell, all will be in vain, they are so blinded that of all you tell them, they believe little or nothing

(b.) *In the obduracy of the heart.* As a bodily sickness is aggravated by a relapse and finally becomes incurable, so the oft-repeated sin makes the ruin of the soul more complete and hopeless at every repetition. At last the man arrives at that point when virtue becomes not only indifferent, but even hateful to him, and he finds pleasure only in wickedness. An example of this hard-heartedness we have in the Scribes and Pharisees, who, in spite of all the doctrines and miracles of Jesus, continued in their unbelief. Great is the number of the impenitent. "Knowest thou not the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance. But according to thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the just judgment of God, who will render to every one according to his works."—*Rom. 2: 4-6*.

## PERORATION.

How evil, how pernicious, are the results of a relapse! The relapsing sinner loses, more and more, the fear of God; he becomes a habitual sinner, and frequently falls into final impenitence. Beware, therefore, of relapsing into your former sins. Make at the coming Easter time a good confession, promise God and your confessor, in all the sincerity of your heart, never again to commit mortal sin. If you have a firm purpose, a lasting conversion is possible; employ the general and particular means of amendment, and God will assist you with his grace, that you shall no more relapse, but work out your salvation and be numbered among the elect. Amen.

## THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.

## 7. MORAL SKETCH.

## THE ADVERSARIES OF CHRIST.

*"He that is not with me, is against me."—Luke 11: 23.*

These are significant words of Christ, from which it necessarily follows that with regard to Jesus there are two classes of men; those who are for him, who belong to him, and serve him, and those who do not serve him, but serve their own passions, the devil, and the world, and are consequently the adversaries of Christ. Such adversaries were the Scribes and Pharisees, who hated the divine Saviour, and in order to lower him in the estimation of the people, ascribed his miracles to the devil. The adversaries of Christ are numberless in our days. Let us speak of them to-day by answering the question:

*Who are the adversaries of Christ?*

## PART I.

*The indifferentists*, that is, persons who are indifferent in matters of faith and morals; they pretend that it matters not what a man believe, whether he belong to this or that Church, whether he be a heathen, Jew, Mohammedan, Protestant, or Catholic, providing he lead an honest life, he shall be saved.

A very pleasant doctrine this indeed, but it is not Christ's. Nor are they who hold it with Christ. That opinion is as far as far can

be from what the Saviour taught. If what we believe or what doctrines we hold were a matter of indifference, why did Christ, for three years, under so many tribulations and persecutions, preach his Gospel, and in order to create belief in him, perform so many miracles? Why did he commission his Apostles to preach his divine doctrine to all nations? To what purpose the Christian faith at all, if any would do, since the Jews, and even the Gentiles, had already a religion? Moreover, Christ always speaks only of *one* Church, which he would found upon Peter, the rock, of *one* shepherd and *one* fold, therefore of *one* faith; he also declares in the plainest terms, that "he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned."—*Mark* 16: 16. And what is the language of the Apostles? They unanimously declare that we can be saved only by the belief in Jesus Christ and his doctrine. Paul and Silas, in answer to the prison-keeper at Philippi, who asked what he should do to be saved, said: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."—*Acts*. 16. 30, 31. St. Peter says: "There is no salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved than in the name of Jesus."—*Acts*. 4: 12.

The indifferentists, then, are open adversaries of Christ, because by their assertion that it does not matter what one believes, they directly contradict his doctrine. Be not deluded by them, when they tell you to believe what you please, only be honest; answer them: God and his Apostles convict you of a lie; to them I shall cling, I shall believe what the holy Catholic Church proposes to be believed, and according to that faith I shall live, for only by doing so, can I obtain my everlasting end.

## PART II.

*The self-constituted innovators, or Church-reformers.* They consider the Church as an old edifice, which does not suit our times, and therefore in need of a reform, or remodeling according to the spirit of the times. The public worship especially, in many points, is to them a stumbling-block; they talk of simplifying it, of removing the unmeaning ceremonies, of the introduction of the vernacular tongue into the public service. The fools! they know not that, as a father of the Church expresses himself, the Church is heaven in miniature, that the gorgeous worship belongs to the majesty of God, whom man can never honor enough; they forget that every, even the least, ceremony has spirit and life, and by no means can be only empty gorgeousness for him who endeavors to know the significance of the ecclesiastical usages. These innovators do not consider that the Latin language elevates the solemnity of the worship and not only strengthens the unity of the

Catholic Church, but also gives a most beautiful evidence of her universality. Truly, there is nothing grander, more noble, and more worthy of God, than the Catholic worship.

Consequently, all who wish to change the worship, or, as they think, to simplify and to amend it, are against Christ, and are enemies of his holy Catholic Church; for she is, also, in this point, guided by the Holy Ghost.

### PART III.

*The half-educated, or the so-called enlightened.* They draw their wisdom from newspapers or discourses which they hear in their clubs, or in their intercourse with the world. They wish to show that they know something, and try, therefore, at every opportunity, to sell, as the saying is, what they have read and heard. And because now-a-days it belongs, forsooth, to the high-toned to disregard everything pertaining to religion, they like to express their opinion when there is a question of the Church, its doctrines, its institutions, and particularly its priests. In the Church, of course, they find a great deal that is worthy of blame; her doctrines and principles are too severe, and no longer suitable to the times; the Papacy must cease, for it agrees not with the liberty and welfare of the people. The bishops and priests hold much too firmly to the obsolete ordinances of the Church; they must accommodate themselves to the spirit of the times, if they wish to continue to exist. The precepts of the Church do not bind; it is particularly foolish to consider the precept of fasting, and the annual confession and communion, to be obligatory!

These are enemies of Christ. Christ is the founder of the holy Catholic Church; he rules and governs her: he promised and sent her the Holy Ghost, the spirit of Truth, to teach her all truth and remain with her till the end of the world. To criticise and blaspheme the Church is to criticise and blaspheme Christ. Moreover, Christ emphatically says: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican."—*Matt.* 18: 17. He that rebels against the Church and despises her precepts and ordinances, is, in the eyes of Christ, as bad as a heathen and a public sinner. Consider this well, that by the talk of those men who wish to be looked upon as enlightened, you may not be shaken in your reverence and obedience to the Church.

### PART IV

*The Rationalists.* These deny the necessity of divine revelation, either absolutely, or assert that we must believe only what we comprehend with our reason; or they place reason above revelation by re-

ceiving and believing the truths of religion revealed by God, only in so far as they can comprehend them by reason. The Rationalists, therefore, set themselves above the Sacred Scriptures and Christian tradition; they receive neither as the word of God at all, or interpret them according to their own fashion. Reason is to them everything; they recognize no other authority, much less any superior, to reason.

That the Rationalists are the adversaries of Christ is evident. Christ has directed all men in matters of faith and morals, to the teaching of the Church, to which they must submit unconditionally. "Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."—*Matt.* 28: 19, 20. How clear are these words! Again: "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."—*Luke* 10: 16. He, therefore, who does not submit to the teaching of the Church, and does not believe and do what she prescribes, hears not Christ, but despises him. Is not such a one an adversary of Christ? Strictly speaking, we must say that the Rationalists have no supernatural and Christian faith. To believe as a Christian is simply to receive as truth what Christ, through his Church, proposes to be believed, and *because he proposes it*. As the Rationalists do not believe many things which the Church proposes to our faith, and whatever they believe, they do not believe because the Church proposes it to be believed, their faith is not a supernatural or a Christian faith, but only a natural and human one, which has no value before God.

#### PART V.

*The atheists, or unbelievers.* In our times there are a great many people who are really very impious, because they believe in no God. If you speak to them of God, the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth, the rewarder of the good and the punisher of the wicked, they laugh and say: "There is no God." And because they believe in no God, they neither believe in the immortality of the soul, nor in reward and punishment, heaven or hell. Man is to them a rational animal; he has no soul, that is, an immortal spirit, and all ends with death.

It is evident that the unbelievers are adversaries of Christ; in spiritual matters they stand lower than the ancient pagans; for the pagans, although sunk in the most horrid errors, believed in gods, in the immortality of the soul, and in a reward or punishment in the next world. But how can a man come to believe in nothing, to deny even the existence of God? Christ gives the answer, saying: "This is the judgment, because

the light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, for their works were evil. For every one that doeth evil, hateth the light and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be re-proved."—*John* 3: 19, 20. It is sin and vice that lead man to unbelief. The truths of faith, of an omnipotent, omniscient, infinitely holy and just God, of judgment, heaven and hell, render the life of the sinner bitter; in order to get rest and peace, he tries to persuade himself that there is no God, no eternity. And he frequently succeeds in shaking off the yoke of faith, or at least in giving himself the appearance of unbelief. No truly pious and virtuous man has ever become an unbeliever. Guard against sin and vice, and you need have no fear of becoming unbelievers.

#### PART VI.

*The Radicals, or Revolutionists.* These stand in the most intimate connection with unbelievers: they, too, wish not to hear of God, and religion is to them an abomination. They are libertines, full of beastly passions. Puffed up with intractable pride, and being miserable slaves of sensual lusts, they hate all existing order, and wish to create a new order of things. They are faithful servants of the devil, whose children they are, and who inflames them daily with his hellish fury. They are well aware that the Catholic Church determinedly resists their plans and machinations for the overthrow of society, and therefore nothing is more odious to them than the Catholic Church. They work with all their might for her downfall. For this purpose they use particularly the public press. Their papers and magazines are used to foment dissatisfaction and to excite innocent people, especially the laboring class, to revolution. With fiendish hate, and the most impudent and cool effrontery, they assail every institution, every class of society. They drag all that is venerable and holy into the mire, blaspheme God, and labor to destroy the Church; they openly preach unbelief, praise murder and rapine as virtue, whilst they detract from the most noble deeds, and ridicule, calumniate, and insult all that are opposed to their wicked schemes.

#### PART VII.

*A great part of Judaism.* The Jews, from the beginning, were the most bitter enemies of Christianity. As history teaches us, they were everywhere at hand where they could do injury to the Catholic Church. In our days it is the Jews that edit the most inflammatory papers against the Church, papers that continually attack and misrepresent our doctrines and ordinances, and disseminate the basest lies and calumnies against priests and religious, to deprive them of their honor



and authority, and thereby to render their influence nugatory for the welfare of the Church. And as they now-a-days are active in all the relations of civil life, and possess great riches, they have a powerful influence and are able to oppress the Church and injure her in many ways.

PERORATION.

I have named to you the principal adversaries of Christ in our days, and have briefly shown you what they are, and what they aim at. Be prudent and circumspect, and guard yourselves against falling into their snares and rendering yourselves miserable for time and eternity. Stand firmly by your holy religion, and by the Church of God, whose children you have become in your infancy by a special grace of God, for where the Catholic Church is, there is Christ, and he that holds with the Church, holds with Christ. If you hold with Christ and serve him faithfully, he will give you his love, protect you from the enemies of your salvation, and invite you to enter into the joys of eternal life. Amen.

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT.

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**EPISTLE.** *Gal. 4. 22-31.* Brethren: It is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, and the other by a free woman: but he that was by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh: but he by the free woman was by the promise. Which things are said by an allegory: for these are the two testaments: the one indeed on Mount Sinai which bringeth forth unto bondage, which is Agar: for Sinai is a mountain in Arabia, which hath an affinity to that which now is Jerusalem, and is in bondage with her children. But that Jerusalem which is above, is free: which is our mother. For it is written: "Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not: break forth and cry out, thou that travailest not: for many are the children of the desolate, more than of her that hath a husband"; now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he, that was born according to the flesh, persecuted him that was according to the spirit: so also now. But what saith the Scripture? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman." Therefore, brethren, we are not the children of the bondwoman but of the free: by the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free.

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## 1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

AGAR AND SARAH, RESPECTIVE TYPES OF THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

St. Paul had founded in Galatia, a province of Asia Minor, several

Christian congregations, which on account of their zeal caused him many joys. After he had left, false teachers came and made a great disturbance among them. They wished to unite the Jewish with the Christian religion, and asserted that the Christians also were obliged to observe the Jewish laws and ceremonies, such as circumcision, sacrifices, fasts and feasts, the difference between clean and unclean food, if they wished to be saved. Now, to guard the Galatians against being led astray, and to keep them in the true faith, the Apostle wrote them a letter, proving that the Old Law of the Jews had ceased and that the new Christian Law had taken its place, according to the precepts of which one must live if he wish to work out his salvation and be saved.

The lesson for this Sunday is but a small portion of this Epistle, in which St. Paul proposes the two wives of Abraham, Agar and Sarah, as the respective types of the Jewish and the Christian Church, and from what the Sacred Scripture says of these two women he proves that the Christians are free from the slavish service of ceremonies.

#### PART I.

*"Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondwoman, and the other by a free woman; but he that was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh; but he of the free woman, was by promise."*

In the Old Law, God had allowed men to have more than one wife. So Abraham, the progenitor of the people of Israel, had two wives, Agar and Sarah. Agar bore him a son according to the course of nature, for she was young and so qualified by nature that she could become a mother. But it was not so with Sarah, who, as the Scripture says, was barren and far advanced in years, so that, in the natural and ordinary course of nature, it was impossible for her to bear a child. And yet she became a mother when she was ninety years of age, Abraham being then in his hundredth year. This was the result of a divine promise.—*Gen. 17: 15-21*. Sarah conceived and brought forth a son in virtue of a miracle, and consequently her son Isaac was a child of grace.

Here already Agar and Sarah appear as the respective types of the Jewish and the Christian Church. Whoever could prove themselves descended from Abraham, were Jews and belonged as a matter of course to the Jewish Church. The descendants of Abraham were, therefore, according to the course of nature, members of the Jewish Church, just as Ismael, *according to the course of nature, was the son of Agar*. Now, we are not in the Christian Church as the Jews were in the synagogue, we are not here by any right of descent or inheritance; we are not nat

urally, but by a special grace of God, members of the Church. Although a child have Christian parents, it is not on that account a member of the Church: it becomes such only by Baptism, which is a grace of God, not earned or merited. The Christian Church, then, is a picture of Sarah, for as she became a mother and brought forth Isaac only through the intervention of God, so we owe it to grace that we are Christians and can call the Christian Church our mother. For this reason Christ says: "No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him."—*John* 6: 44. And St. Paul writes. "Who (Christ) hath delivered us, and called us, by his holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us."—*II. Tim* 1: 9. If, therefore, you are asked, of what faith are you? you must answer: "By the grace of God I am a Catholic," for only to grace must we ascribe it, that we are Christians and children of the Catholic Church. Whilst so many millions of men, Turks, heathens, Jews, heretics, and schismatics, are sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, and are in extreme danger of being lost, we walk in the light of faith and are members of the Catholic Church, that Church in which we possess abundant means and graces to work out our salvation and be saved. Is this not a grace for which we can never sufficiently thank God? Let us employ this grace for our salvation, considering that much shall be asked of him to whom much has been given.

#### PART II.

*Which things are said by an allegory: for these are the two testaments; the one indeed on Mount Sinai, which bringeth forth unto bondage, which is Agar; for Sinai is a mountain in Arabia, which hath an affinity to that which is now Jerusalem, and in bondage with her children. But that Jerusalem, which is above, is free; which is our mother."*

By these words again the Apostle expresses that Agar and Sarah, with their sons, are respective types of the old and the New Law, or of the Jewish and the Christian Church. As is known, the Old Law was given on Mount Sinai. This law is prefigured by Agar and her son Ismael. Agar, indeed, was Abraham's wife, but she was not a free woman, but only a servant, a bondwoman. Being herself a servant, a bondwoman, any child born to her should be born into her condition, that of slavery, and consequently her son was from his birth a bondman, a slave. Behold, this Agar with her son Ismael resembled the Old Law and the Jews for whom it was given. This law, in truth, was nothing but a law for slaves. Why? Because it made provisions as laws do for slaves. In order to keep slaves in subjection and obedience, they are threatened with punishments, or coaxed with

promises of temporal reward. The Old Law did this. It was given on Mount Sinai amidst thunder and lightning and all the signs of terror, again, it contains the severest penalties for its violators, and the greatest temporal rewards for its observers. "Now, if thou wilt not hear the voice of the Lord thy God, to do and to keep all his commandments . . . all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, cursed in the field, cursed shall be thy barn, and cursed thy stores, cursed shall be the fruit of thy womb and the fruit of thy ground, the herds of thy oxen and the flocks of thy sheep; cursed shalt thou be coming in, and cursed going out. The Lord shall send upon thee famine and hunger, and a rebuke upon all the works which thou shalt do, until he consume and destroy thee quickly. . . . But if thou wilt hear the voice of the Lord thy God, to do and keep all his commandments . . . all these blessings shall come upon thee and overtake thee. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed in the field, blessed shall be the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, and the droves of thy herds, and the folds of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy barns, and blessed thy stores. Blessed shalt thou be coming in and going out."—*Deut.* 28. Behold here the law for slaves indicated by Agar and Ismael.

But Sarah, with her son Isaac, is a type of the Christian Law and of the Christian Church. She was a free woman, a consort, and participated in all the rights of Abraham, her son Isaac, too, was a free man and had a claim and title to all the rights and privileges of his mother. Thus the Christian Church, which by the prophets, and especially by St. John in the Apocalypse, is designated as the new heavenly Jerusalem, is *free*, for her law has neither threats, fear, nor terror, but love, for its basis. We Christians are no longer servants, but children of God, as St. John writes: "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be named and should be the sons of God."—*I. John* 3: 1. If we adhere to God with filial love and do his will, we may with reason hope for the everlastings joys of heaven. How much better off, then, are we than were the Jews of the Old Testament! Whilst God treated them as servants and was obliged to treat them as such on account of their wild and intractable disposition, he adopts us as his children; whilst the Jews approaching God veiled their faces out of terror and dared not pronounce his name, we draw near him with filial confidence, praying, "Abba, Father." Let us highly esteem our dignity, and let us not pollute it by the gratification of low passions let us exhibit ourselves as good children of our heavenly Father and cheerfully do his holy will.

## PART III.

*"It is written: Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not; break forth and cry out, thou that travailest not, for many are the children of the desolate, more than of her that hath a husband."*

Here again St. Paul draws a comparison between Agar and Sarah, and between the Jewish and the Christian Church. Sarah was barren and to all seeming was fated to die childless. This was not the case with Agar, for she had already a son, and as she was in her best years, it could be expected that she would have more children yet, and be blessed with a numerous posterity. But, behold! the contrary happened. Sarah, the barren wife, by a divine promise, brought forth a son, Isaac, in her old age, when she was naturally past child-bearing, and obtained an incomparably greater posterity than Agar; for the people of Israel, who are descended from Abraham and Sarah, were far more numerous and powerful than the people of Ismael, who had Ismael, the son of Agar, for their progenitor. It is the same with the Jewish and the Christian Church. The Jewish Church, foreshadowed by Agar, outstripped the Christian in the beginning in numbers and authority, for whilst the former counted her adherents by the million, the latter, on the feast of Pentecost, was so little that they had room in a single hall at Jerusalem, there being, all told, only about one hundred and twenty souls. As little as Sarah could hope for a numerous posterity before the birth of Isaac, so little could the Church apparently hope before that day of Pentecost to count her millions one day and bespread over the entire world. She seemed to be as barren as Sarah was, since her doctrine stood in direct contradiction with the views and passions of men, and for her propagation no one seemed less fit than the Apostles, those poor, illiterate, and despised fishermen. But as God had promised Abraham that he should multiply his descendants as the stars of heaven and the sands on the sea-shore, so the Church also received the promise that she should be extended over all the world, and be propagated among all nations. And this promise was fulfilled. The Church, notwithstanding all obstacles and persecutions, gained daily additional growth, and at present counts about two hundred and fifty millions of children.

Thus St. Paul could with justice apply the words of the Prophet Isaiah (54: i-3) to the Catholic Church: "Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not, break forth and cry out, thou that travailest not, for many are the children of the desolate, more than of her that hath a husband." We also have the great happiness to be her children, therefore the Apostle calls us *children of the promise*. We have good reason to rejoice that God has called us to this blessing of being children of his holy

Church; but let it be our care that this great grace be not bestowed on us in vain, that we prove ourselves by a saintly life true children of Holy Church

## ART IV.

*"But as then he, who was born according to the flesh, persecuted him who was born according to the spirit, so also now. But what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman."*

As Sacred History informs us, Ismael derided Isaac and injured him in many ways, for he hated him, seeing that he was preferred before him and inherited of his father, although he was not the first-born. Sarah, noticing this, importuned Abraham to cast Ismael with his mother out of the house. Abraham hesitated to comply with Sarah's wish, but God told him to comply with the desire of his wife, whereupon Abraham dismissed Agar with her son Ismael.—*Gen. 21: 9-14.*

In this occurrence the Apostle again beholds a type of the Jewish and the Christian Church. As Ismael persecuted Isaac, derided and grudged him the blessing of primogeniture, so the Jews hated and persecuted the Christians as long as they had the power, as is evident from the Acts of the Apostles. Some of the Jews who had become believers in Christ, were even hostile to the Christians converted from Gentilism, and despised them; for they imagined that to them alone, as the children of Abraham and the chosen people of God, the grace of Christianity was due, and that the Christians from Gentilism were bound to keep the Jewish law, else they could not be true Christians and be saved. The lot of Ismael befell them; they were rejected by the Lord for their obstinacy and spirit of persecution, according to the word of Jesus: "I say unto you, that many shall come from the East and the West, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into exterior darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."—*Matt. 8: 11, 12.* While pagan nations entered the Church, the great majority of the Jews persevered in unbelief and impenitence, and therefore were deprived of the grace of Redemption, which was intended for them the first of all nations.

In Ismael and Isaac we also behold depicted the worldly-minded and the zealous adherents of Christ. The former mock, despise, and persecute the latter; according to them, there is no other happiness than that of the children of the world; it is the goods and pleasures of this earth they are after. Those who mortify themselves, despise earthly things, and aspire to what is above, are fools in their eyes. But how wretched should we be if we shared the opinion of these

worldly people! We should, like the unbelieving and hard-hearted Jews, be rejected by the Lord. Do not lose sight of your eternal destiny. In our time, the greater part of mankind live in forgetfulness of God, and give free scope to their passions. Do you hold to Christ and his Church, that you may not be lost with the many who are called, but saved with the few who are chosen.

We all have in ourselves an Ismael and an Isaac, the flesh that fights against the spirit, the old and the new man, who are always at war with each other, let us do as Abraham did, let us cast out Ismael, the old, carnal man, for flesh and blood can not inherit the kingdom of God.

#### PERORATION.

St. Paul concludes the epistle for this day with the words: "*Therefore, brethren, we are not the children of the bondwoman but of the free, by the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free.*" That is, we are no longer subject to the old ceremonial law of the Jews; for Christ has abolished this law now and for ever and has made us free. But our liberty does not consist in living according to our lusts and passions, for he who permits himself to be governed by them is a wretched slave. Only then are we truly free when we mortify ourselves, carry our cross daily, and follow Christ, whom to serve is to reign. To obtain and preserve this Christian freedom must be our constant endeavor, that "we have our fruit unto sanctification, and the end everlasting life."—*Rom. 6: 22. Amen.*

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT.

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**GOSPEL.** *St. John 6: 1-15.* At that time: Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is that of Tiberias: and a great multitude followed him, because they saw the miracles which he did on them that were infirm. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. Now the pasch, the festival day of the Jews, was near at hand. When Jesus therefore had lifted up his eyes, and seen that a very great multitude cometh to him, he said to Philip: Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat? And this he said to try him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him. Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, saith to him: There is a boy here that hath five barley loaves, and two fishes; but what are these among so many? Then Jesus said: Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place: So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves: and when he had given thanks he distributed to them that were sat down. In like manner also of the fishes as much as they would. And when they were filled, he said to his disciples: Gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost. So they gathered up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above to them that had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen what a miracle Jesus had done, said: This is the prophet indeed that is to come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force and make him king, he fled again into the mountain himself alone.

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## 2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

## THE MIRACULOUS MULTIPLICATION OF BREAD.

The gospel for this day relates that Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee, and went up into a mountain, and that "there he sat with his disciples." His disciples whom he had sent out in pairs to prepare the people for his coming, had returned from their mission and had made a report of the success of their labors. He wished to give them some rest and recreation, and, therefore, retired with them into solitude. But the people, on account of the miracles he wrought, were very much attached to him, and followed him into the solitude and were gathered around him on the mountain. Here it was that our Lord, after having taught the assembled multitude till evening and healed the sick that were brought to him, wrought the great miracle by so multiplying five loaves of bread and two fishes, that more than five thousand men were filled; and after they had eaten, there remained a great deal more than there had been altogether in the beginning.



Let us meditate on this miracle, and consider what occurred

*I. Before it;*

*II. At it;*

*I. After it.*

#### PART I.

1. Jesus wished to reward the people, who, with a very commendable zeal, had listened for days to his divine word; and so he resolved to work a miracle. These people had continued with him the whole day, eagerly listening to the words of salvation from his mouth, without regard to the hunger which they must have felt. This action of Christ and of the people teaches us that we must always be more solicitous for our soul and eternal salvation than for the body and our temporal wants. The soul is more valuable than the body, and eternal life is of more consequence than the temporal. But many scarcely seem to think so. With what are they occupied when they awake in the morning? Is it with God and the salvation of their soul? No. They are occupied with earthly, and perhaps even sinful things. What do their thoughts, desires, and cares aim at during the day? Again only at earthly things; they do not care about heavenly things. And what do they do in the evening? They go to rest without prayer, or they pray with so many distractions and with so little devotion that they rather offend God than honor him. How do they conduct themselves on Sundays and holidays? They do not work, they wear better clothes, they go to church. But have they on such days any better spirit and disposition than on other days? No, their hearts are even on these sanctified days engaged with purely temporal things; they pray little and ill, they hear the word of God either not at all or without good resolutions; the hour they spend at church appears to them longer than whole days spent at work. Christians, is this not to invert order and to act more foolishly than unwise children who exchange precious pearls for pieces of stained glass? Oh! act like Christians, act as if you possessed the sense and the reason of grown people; seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all things which are necessary for your temporal welfare shall be added unto you.

2. We see that in the gospel for this day. Jesus turns to Philip with the question: "*Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?*" Behold, how lovingly he thinks of the temporal wants of the people; he will not dismiss them without having fed them. But why does he ask Philip this question? As the Gospel says: "This he said to try him, for he himself knew what he would do." He

knew the weakness of the faith of Philip and the other Apostles. in order to turn their attention to the miracle which he was going to work, and to bring them to the knowledge of the weakness of their faith, he asked and tried them. Thus God frequently tries people, leaving them for some time in their distress, although he is ready to help them, in order to cleanse them from their imperfections and faults, or to give them an opportunity of practicing some virtue, such as humility, patience, or self-denial, or to increase their merits for heaven. When God visits you with such trials, imitate Abraham, Job, and other Saints, and persevere in patience and confidence in God, for to them that love God, "all things work together unto good."—*Rom.* 8: 28.

3. Philip understood not the drift of our Lord's words. For he said: "*Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little.*" If bread was to be bought for the feeding of the multitude, two hundred pence, that is, about forty or fifty dollars of our money, would not have been sufficient. Fifty dollars' worth would have given only one cent's worth of bread to each man, evidently not sufficient to appease his hunger. Many a head of a family is sometimes as sorely perplexed as Philip; he actually needs for the support of his wife and children and other necessary outlays fifty or a hundred dollars, and he has not so many cents. What is he to do in this strait? Trust in God, persevere in patience, and do what he can to meet the necessity; then everything will come right. It would be a mistake, and a great mistake, for such needy fathers of families to become angry and indignant, break out into curses and blasphemies, and let all go to rack and ruin, saying, It is no use to try; or to have recourse to illicit means, as cheating or theft, in order to alleviate their distress.

4. Andrew, the brother of Peter, was of Philip's opinion: "*There is a boy here that hath five barley loaves and two fishes, but what are these among so many!*" As men judge, Andrew was right; five loaves of bread and two fishes were no more sufficient to feed five thousand men, than two hundred pence would have been if they had been spent in buying bread. But both Apostles erred in deciding according to their reason alone, and forming a judgment according to what they saw before them. They should have reflected: "Jesus is the Son of God, nothing is impossible to him; he has wrought many miracles before for the good of men; it is easy for him by a miracle to procure bread for these hungry people." So you must think when you are in a situation in which you can find no advice or relief. God need not work a manifest miracle to help you; he has a hundred other ways and means by which he can make all right again.

## PART II.

Let us now consider the great miracle which Christ wrought. He ordered his Apostles to tell the people to sit down. This could be done easily and comfortably, as there was much grass in the place. And they sat down in ranks by hundreds and by fifties.—*Mark 6: 10.* So there was no difficulty in seeing all that were there and in counting them. The number of men who sat down was five thousand, the number of women and children, who had separate places, may have been about two thousand. There they were sitting, the seven thousand, in rows, by hundreds and by fifties. All were hungry, for the sun was near its setting, and they were still fasting. But wherewith should they be fed, when all food was wanting? Could they not say, with the Israelites: "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" Yes, Jesus, the Son of God, could and would furnish a table. He took the five loaves, lifted up his eyes, and when he had given thanks, he distributed, through his Apostles, to them that had sat down. In like manner also of the fishes as much as they would. And all took and ate and were filled. And after that, they gathered up the fragments of the five barley loaves which remained over and gave to them that had eaten, and with them they filled twelve baskets.

This, in brief, is the history of the miraculous multiplying of bread and the feeding of the people. Let us now, for our instruction, make a few practical reflections on it.

1. Jesus feeds five thousand men with five loaves of bread and two fishes; this is a great miracle. But is not this miracle, and a greater one still, repeated every day? Who is it that feeds every day the hundreds of millions of men who live upon earth, together with the other beings whose number no system of computation can enumerate? Who is it that makes sixty, eighty, or a hundred grains proceed from one, and who fills our barns every year with grain? It is Jesus, the one God with the Father and the Holy Ghost, through whom, as St. John says, all was made that is made, who daily opens his hands and fills all with blessing. It is our duty to show him the same gratitude, the same love, and the same devotedness that these people did who were fed by Christ.

2. Our Lord blessed the bread, and thereby rendered it enough to allay the hunger of many thousand people. Everything depends on the blessing of God. What do our labor and exertions profit without the blessing of God? What does it profit to plow to harrow, to fertilize, and to sow, if God does not send favorable weather and keep everything injurious from our fields? "Neither he that planteth

is anything, nor he that watereth, but God, who giveth the increase."—*I. Cor.* 3: 7. Consider this truth and be not proud of your prosperity and the success of your business, but give the honor to God alone.

3. Jesus shows us how we can obtain God's blessing. Holding the bread in his holy hands, he looked up to heaven (*Mark* 6: 41) and prayed. By this he teaches us that prayer is the most effectual means for drawing down the blessings of God upon our works and undertakings. It is only too certain that many Christians do not make any advance or progress with all their pains and labor, because they neglect prayer. They neither say their morning and evening prayers nor grace before and after their meals; they think not of God during the whole day, and are loth to give any time to prayer, even on Sundays and holidays: therefore God withdraws his grace from them. Renew to-day the resolution to pray with fervor and devotion; and you, Christian parents, see that your children say their morning and evening prayers.

4. Our divine Saviour gave to the multitude, in which were not only common people, but also people from the higher walks of society, a very common food, barley-bread and fish. This may be a lesson to us to be satisfied with common food, which is suitable to our state of life, and not to desire costly and dainty dishes. Christ, the Lord himself, lived in poverty; he told his disciples to eat and drink what might be set before them, good and bad, just as it would come; and the greatest Saints frequently contented themselves with a fare that would have been thought too bad for the poorest people. This much is certain, that people who do not restrain the craving of the appetite will never arrive at perfection.

5. The Apostles gathered more food than there was in the beginning, for of the fragments twelve baskets were filled. From this you may learn that alms-giving does not make you poor. "He that hath mercy on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and he will repay him."—*Prov.* 19: 17. He that lends money on interest, receives the capital with the interest, therefore more than he loaned. The same is true of what we give to the poor; we receive it back with interest. God blesses the charitable even in this world, and gives them success in all their undertakings. Everything prospers with them, and even their children and children's children enjoy the divine blessing. But alms-giving is far more profitable for the other world, for it is rewarded with eternal life. What an encouragement this should be to us for giving alms, according to the admonition of Tobias (4: 8, 9): According to thy ability, be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little."

## PART III.

Let us now meditate a few moments on what occurred after the miracle—

1. "*Then those men, when they had seen what a miracle Christ had done, said: This is the prophet indeed that is to come into the world.*" They do not call Christ a prophet, such as Elias, Eliseus, Isaias, but *the* prophet, therefore a specified prophet, that is, that prophet to whom Moses referred in these words: "The Lord thy God will raise up to thee a *PROPHET* of thy nation and of thy brethren like unto me; him thou shalt hear."—*Deut.* 18: 15. This prophet is no other than Jesus Christ, the God-Man and Redeemer of the world. The people by designating him *the* Prophet expressed their faith that he is the Son of God, the promised Messiah.

How much do those people put to shame so many men of our time! One miracle which they saw is enough for them to become believers, and yet all the miracles which the Gospel relates of Christ, and which, in his name, from the time of the Apostles until now, have been wrought in the Catholic Church, can not bring these modern unbelievers to fall down before Jesus, and confess with Peter: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." With the ancient miracles they also deny the modern and those which are performed, as it were, before their eyes; for example, the miracles at Lourdes, France, which are attested by thousands of witnesses and the most learned men. They *will* not believe, therefore they do not believe. They also permit themselves to be ruled by their base passions, especially pride, and this is the principal reason why they do not arrive at the faith; yea, apostatize from the faith. Serve God and walk constantly in the way of his commandments, and you will never come to be in danger of losing your holy faith.

2. The people were not satisfied with acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah; with a believing heart, they were about "*to take him by force and make him king.*" They wished to make him their prince, guide, and protector. Here they showed their gratitude towards the divine Saviour. And, behold, in the same manner we must manifest our gratitude towards Jesus for the many benefits and graces which we have received; we must adore him with the most profound veneration as our Lord and God, and adhere to and serve him with faithful love. But there are many among us who do the very opposite. How many refuse him the adoration due him; even in the church, where he is really present, they offend him by their unbecoming conduct! How many abuse the benefits of God, such as health, beauty, temporal goods,

for the gratification of their sinful lusts! How many reject the proffered graces, or make use of them only to offend him the more grievously! Oh, Christians, consider that the abuse of the graces and gifts of God is the greatest ingratitude, and that a most rigorous judgment awaits all those who make themselves guilty of this crime.

3. Jesus knew that they wished to proclaim him king. What does he do? Does he permit it? No, he flees into the mountain himself alone. He teaches by his example that we also must shun the honors of the world. When the people will make him king, he flees; but when he was about to be humiliated most profoundly, and to be crucified as the greatest malefactor, he offers himself voluntarily, for it is his greatest desire to be humiliated and humbled. Do we not do the very reverse? Honor, reputation, authority, the praise and the applause of the world, are to us the most desirable of goods, and we seek them; contumely and humiliation appear to us as great evils, and we flee from them as much as we can. And we profess to be disciples and followers of Jesus! Ah, that we might hear him when he exclaims to us: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart."—*Matt. 11: 29*. If we do not seek humiliation and contumely, let us bear them at least with quiet and patience, as often as they come upon us; let us never seek honor in the eyes of the world, that we may not deprive ourselves of honor before God and of the merits for heaven.

#### PERORATION.

Keep in mind the lessons you have heard to-day and follow them. You are more fortunate than the people mentioned in the gospel of this day, for you need not make a long and laborious journey to find Jesus. You have him near you, and can come to him at all times, for he is here in the tabernacle truly present under the species of bread. Oh, that it were your greatest joy frequently to visit and adore him! Jesus in this Easter time will give you an infinitely more precious food than he gave the people in the desert; he will nourish you with his most sacred flesh and blood in holy communion. Oh, employ this holy season of Lent in preparing for a worthy reception of the most holy Sacrament of the Altar, that it may bring you grace and life everlasting. Amen.

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT.

### 3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

## THE FIRM PURPOSE OF AMENDMENT.

*"And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to them that were set down."—John 6: 11.*

In this holy Easter time every Catholic is obliged by a precept of the Church to receive the Blessed Eucharist. The gospel for this day, which speaks of the miraculous feeding of several thousand men, reminds us of this duty. In a far more miraculous manner does Jesus feed us in holy Easter time, for he gives not natural bread, but, as our infallible faith teaches us, his most sacred flesh and blood; he nourishes, not only our body for the preservation of its natural life, but also our soul for the preservation of its supernatural life; he feeds, not a few thousands, but many millions—all that come to his table. But, that we may receive this bread of Angels to our salvation, we must have a clean heart, for he who goes unworthily to communion, is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; for "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself," that is, damnation. To prevent such an evil, the Church requires that we should go to confession before communion, cleanse our soul from every sin, and put ourselves in the state of grace.

I have spoken of the first two requisites for a good confession, and I come to-day to the third, *i. e.*, the firm purpose of amendment, which consists in the earnest will to amend our lives and to offend God no more. In order to give the necessary instruction on the firm purpose of amendment which is an essential part of contrition, I shall answer the following two questions:

- I. What must be the qualities of our resolution of amendment?*
- II. What must he who forms a firm and sincere resolution of amendment determine to do?*

## PART I.

Our resolution of amendment must be like our contrition—

1. *Interior, or sincere;*
2. *Universal; and*
3. *Supernatural.*

(a.) *Interior, or sincere: i. e., we must have, not a weak, but a strong will to offend God no more.* Many sinners are convinced of the necessity of their conversion; they desire to break the chains of sin, but their desire is not strong; they do not desire their amendment with determination and perseverance. Soon after confession they fall into their former levity and carelessness, they forget what they resolved and promised, and relapse into their old sins. Such Christians lack a sincere purpose of amendment, for if they had one, they would offer greater resistance to temptations, and would not allow themselves to fall so soon again. They have reason to fear that their confessions have been invalid and sacrilegious, for the want of a firm purpose of amendment.

(b.) *We must have a firm will to renounce sin here and now, and not after a while.* There are many sinners who will change their life, they say, not now, but after a while. Many a young man thinks: When I grow older, when I get married, I will give up my sinful life. Many business men think: When I have set my temporal affairs in order, I will attend to the business of my salvation. With such a disposition of mind they go to confession for years; every time they entertain this thought, if not expressed, at least implicitly: After a while I will amend my life, not now. What else is this than to tell God, as it were, to his face: I will offend thee now, but after a while I will no more offend thee. And should God forgive a man who speaks thus? Consider that hell is full of those who wished to be, but never were converted.

(c.) *We must have a firm will rather to suffer all evils than again to offend God by a mortal sin.* Mortal sin is the greatest evil, for it deprives us of sanctifying grace, deprives us of the pleasure of God, shuts heaven against us, and opens hell at our feet. There is no evil in the world that can be compared with it. From this it follows that we must detest and shun sin more than all temporal evils, nay, more than death itself. Therefore, a man who is not determined to avoid mortal sin under all circumstances, is destitute of the sincere purpose of amendment, and can not hope for God's forgiveness. For this reason also the confessions of many penitents are invalid. They wish to amend their life, but will not if it is to cost a sacrifice. If the confessor requires them to give up a sinful familiarity, avoid a certain house or company, forgive their enemies, restore ill-gotten goods, retract calumny, they become discouraged, and say that they can not resolve to comply with these conditions. This is a manifest sign that they have no earnest purpose of amendment, for if they had, they would be resolved to renounce sin at any cost.

## 2. *Universal.*



(a.) We must be determined to avoid, at least, *all mortal sins*. Every mortal sin kills the soul by depriving it of its true life, which is sanctifying grace and the love of God, and makes us guilty of eternal damnation; therefore, if we wish to recover the love and grace of God, and escape eternal damnation, we must be determined to avoid all mortal sins. He who will not determine to commit no mortal sin any more, can not have a universal purpose of amendment, and, consequently, can not make a good confession. Ask yourselves, then, at every confession: Is there no sin to which my heart is attached? Do I hate and detest every sin? Can I say with truth, that I will commit no mortal sin any more? Pay particular attention to your favorite and habitual sins, and promise God sincerely not to commit them any more.

(b.) Concerning venial sins, it is not absolutely necessary that the purpose extends itself to all without exception, as St. Thomas of Aquin (and with him the divines unanimously) says: "It suffices if one resolves to avoid some of them, or to diminish their number." It is, however, good and salutary to repent of them all and make the resolution, with the help of God's grace, to avoid them to the best of our ability. At every confession we should have the purpose not to offend God by a venial sin knowingly and with premeditation. If we have only venial sins to confess, the purpose must extend itself at least to one of the venial sins, because the purpose of amendment, like contrition, is absolutely necessary for the validity of every confession.

### 3. *Supernatural.*

(a.) We must be determined to sin no more, because faith teaches us that by every sin we offend God, lose his grace, shut heaven, and open hell. If any one resolves only from a natural motive to sin no more, *i. e.*, on account of some temporal loss, shame, or punishment, his purpose is only natural, and a natural purpose suffices no more for the forgiveness of sin than a natural contrition. By sin God is offended; for God's sake we must be sorry for the sin and resolve not to commit it any more. For the want of a supernatural purpose of amendment, many confessions are invalid. Example: Females who, in consequence of their dissipation, have brought shame and misery on themselves, habitual drunkards who, in consequence of repeated drunkenness, have contracted serious sickness; gamblers who, by their passion for gambling, have lost their money and property. The most sincere purpose of amendment, of avoiding this or that sin, avails nothing if it is only natural.

(b.) As the supernatural contrition, so the supernatural purpose is

either *perfect* or *imperfect*. If the love of God is so perfect and effectual in us that it alone produces in us the firm purpose to avoid sin, our purpose is perfect; but if the love of God in us is yet weak and imperfect, and on that account the fear of hell or the loss of heaven, or the malice and turpitude of sin, must impel us to resolve earnestly to offend God no more, our purpose is imperfect. The perfect purpose of amendment evidently is better than the imperfect; in connection with confession, however, the imperfect purpose is sufficient to obtain the forgiveness of sin.

## PART II.

He who forms a firm and sincere resolution of amendment must be determined—

1. *To avoid, at least, all grievous sins, so that he would suffer anything rather than commit even one; to shun the danger, and especially the proximate occasion of sin.*

(a.) We must be determined to avoid, at least, all mortal sins. Of this I have already spoken. This, however, is not sufficient; we must also shun the danger of sin, and especially the proximate occasion of sin. By proximate occasion, we understand such an occasion as exercises so great an influence over persons that they generally sin. Such proximate occasions of sin are: The living together with a person with whom one has already frequently sinned carnally, the so-called keeping of company, the reading of obscene books. Sometimes something is a proximate occasion for one, whilst it is not for another. Thus, the visiting of saloons is a proximate occasion for him who gets drunk, whilst it is not for others, who do not become intoxicated. For a good purpose of amendment it is required to avoid the proximate occasion of sin. He who is determined to sin no more must also be determined to avoid that which might entice him to sin again. As it is impossible to carry fire in the bosom and not be burned, to touch pitch and not be defiled, so it is impossible to expose one's self to the proximate occasion of sin, and not sin. It is a great delusion to say: I will never sin by impurity again, but I will not give up the society of that person; I will never curse and swear while gambling, but I can not give up gambling; I will never get drunk again, but I can not omit visiting saloons. They may be earnest with their protestations, but will they keep their promises? No, for the Holy Ghost assures us: "He that loveth danger, shall perish in it."—*Eccles. 3: 27*. A spiritual writer (Drexelius) says: "In vain you drive the flies from sweetmeats, as long as you leave them uncovered on the table; you have scarcely chased them off when they come again." You must remove the allurements

to sin—the *baa occasions*—otherwise sin will soon return, and captivate and control you more than before. Examples: Dina, Jacob's daughter (*Gen.* 34: 1, etc.); David (*II. Kings* 11); Solomon (*III. Kings* 11); Peter.

2. *Excuses: I have frequently been in such occasions, but I am not aware of having sinned.* It may be that you have not sinned in deed, but have you remained clean of heart? And though you may in no way have sinned, who assures you that in the future you shall not sin? Do you know the proverb: "Oft goes the pitcher to the well, but at last comes broken home"? As often as you expose yourselves frivolously to the proximate occasion of sin, you tempt God, and will God protect you? *I can not avoid this occasion*; for example, I can not give up the society of this person, because it would reduce me to poverty; I can not remove this person out of my house, because my business would suffer loss; I can not stay away from this society, because my honor, my existence, would be injured. I recommend all such to consider the word of Christ: "If thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee, for it is better for thee with one eye to enter into heaven, than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire."—*Matt.* 18: 9. He, therefore, who does not shun the proximate occasion of sin, which he can shun, although with great difficulty, is not earnestly determined to avoid sin itself, and no priest can validly absolve him.

### 3. *To use the necessary means of amendment.*

(a.) These means are *general* and *particular*. To the general means belong watchfulness, prayer, the hearing of the word of God, spiritual reading, the frequent reception of the Sacraments, the bridling of the senses, the mortification of the bad inclinations, especially of self-love. All sinners, whatever sins they may have committed, must employ these means, in order to preserve themselves from a relapse, and to make progress on the way of virtue. The particular means are those which, according to the quality of sin and the particular relations of the sinner, are required for a thorough and permanent amendment. The confessor usually prescribes these particular means.

(b.) Every penitent must conscientiously avail himself of these general and particular means of amendment. He who will not do this, is destitute of a good resolution, for he who wills the end, must also will the means. Though sensuality object to these means, we must not neglect them. If a sick man observes the strictest diet, takes the bitter medicine, and permits cauterizing and other surgical operations, to escape death and to recover his health, why should not we use these,

hard though they be, if they are necessary for our amendment and the salvation of our souls?

4. *To make due satisfaction for his sins, and to repair whatever injury he may have done to his neighbor.*

(a.) By every sin we commit, we do an injury to God, because we rob him of what we owe him, honor, love, and obedience. Sin makes us debtors to God, and we have the duty, as far as we can, to make satisfaction. This satisfaction, as I shall afterwards explain at greater length, may be made by all good works, especially by works of mercy and mortification. He who is animated by a true spirit of repentance, endeavors, as far as it is in his power, to make satisfaction to God for the injury done him.

(b.) There are sins by which not only God is offended, but our neighbor is also injured in his temporal or spiritual welfare. To this class belong scandal, seduction, murder, calumny, slander, detraction, theft, cheating, and every unjust injury of the neighbor's property. If one has committed such a sin, he is strictly bound to repair the injury which he has done to his neighbor. If he has calumniated or slandered his neighbor, he is bound publicly to retract his slander or calumny; if he has appropriated to himself unjust goods, he must make restitution; if he has unjustly injured his neighbor in body, life, or property, he must repair the damage; if he has seduced others to sin, he must endeavor to bring them back to the way of virtue. If he does not resolve to do this, the best resolutions would profit him nothing, nay, it would profit him nothing if he should even execute his resolutions and avoid sin most carefully. God will not and can not forgive him, because he refuses to repair the injury he has done.

#### PERORATION.

Remember what I have told you on the resolution of amendment, and examine yourselves at every confession, whether your resolution is such as to entitle you to the forgiveness of your sins. Be determined to avoid not only sin, but also the proximate occasion of sin, to employ the means of amendment, to make satisfaction and the necessary reparation of the injury. If the execution of this resolution appears arduous, consider: It must be done, either to execute the resolution and to do true penance, or to remain in sin and in the disgrace of God and to perish eternally. You have your choice between the two. Be prudent, and choose what will be for your salvation. Amen.

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT.

## 4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

## THE MASSES OF LENT.

*"And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to them that were set down."—John 6: 11.*

The fourth Sunday of Lent bears the name "*Lætare*"—rejoice. This name comes from the Latin word *lætari*, with which the Church, in the Introit of Holy Mass, exhorts us to rejoice and be glad. The half of Lent being over, the Church gives us some recreation for the hardships endured so far, and calls upon us to rejoice and be glad in view of the graces which the holy exercises of Lent procure for us. By having the gospel of the miraculous multiplying of bread read to us she reminds us of the miraculous heavenly bread which we receive at Easter time, and of our duty to prepare properly for its reception by exercises of penance. We are, moreover, reminded of this duty by the holy Masses which the Church has ordained for Lent. Let us meditate to-day on these Lenten Masses, by answering the following two questions:

*I. Why has the Church ordained a proper Mass for every day of Lent?*

*II. In what do these Lenten Masses differ from the other Masses?*

## PART I.

The Missal contains a proper Mass for every day of Lent, whilst at other seasons proper masses are assigned, with some exceptions, only to Sundays and holidays. By this ordinance the Church gives us to understand that we should look upon the days of Lent, as it were, as Sundays and holidays, and spend them as such. On Sundays and holidays we *must pray, hear the word of God, and meditate upon it*. With these two exercises we must occupy ourselves during Lent.

I. The ordinance of the Church, that the Mass-book, or Missal, has a proper Mass for every day of Lent, should be an admonition to you to *devote yourselves diligently to prayer and devoutly to hear Holy Mass as often as possible*. The Christians of the first centuries give you a beautiful example. They assembled early in the morning, and not only heard Mass, but remained after the holy sacrifice for some time in the church and prayed. Having finished their day's work, they again

repaired to the church and persevered there in prayer and meditation till the priest gave them his blessing and dismissed them. With the same fervor they practiced their domestic devotions. Thus every day of Lent was to them, as it were, a holiday, which they employed for the honor of God and the salvation of their soul.

In like manner we must celebrate the forty days' fast. Nothing is more necessary to us for repentance and a pious life than the exercises of devotion and prayer. All true penitents frequently practiced prayer.—David (*II. Kings* 12: 13, *Ps.* 118); the good thief on the cross (*Luke* 23: 46); St. Paul (*Acts* 9: 9–11). I am sure, you know no Christian who was converted without prayer, or who did not pray after his conversion. Pray diligently during Lent, this time of penance. Hear Holy Mass daily, if possible; remain somewhat longer in church on Sundays and holidays than at other times to adore Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist and to practice some other devotions. Say the *Rosary* at least once a week, if you can not every day, with the insertion of the sorrowful mysteries, and the *holy Way of the Cross* at least on Sundays, because this devotion is particularly adapted for Lent, in which the bitter Passion and death of Jesus Christ should be especially venerated.

2. To prayer you must join the *hearing and the meditation of the word of God*. You find in your Gospel-book a proper Epistle and a proper Gospel for every day of Lent. These daily Epistles and Gospels are also found in the Missal, and the priest reads these Gospels always at the end of Mass, although the Mass be not of the day, but of a Saint. Why has the Church ordained proper Epistles and Gospels for every day of Lent? Certainly, for no other reason than to induce us in this holy time to hear and meditate on the word of God. The word of God is a powerful means for repentance, piety and virtue, to which we should aspire, especially during Lent. St. Jerome says: "The preaching of the word of God is a plough which loosens the soil, eradicates the roots of vices, and softens the hardness of hearts." Examples of the efficacy of the word of God are the Ninevites, who, at the preaching of Jonas, did penance in sackcloth and ashes; the Jews, many of whom were converted by St. John, the preacher of penance; the inhabitants of Jerusalem, of whom three thousand were baptized at the first sermon of St. Peter. And not only the spoken word, but also the read and meditated word of God frequently exercises a wonderful power on the human heart. Examples: St. Augustine, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Theresa, who, by reading and meditating on the word of God, were so moved that they renounced the world and dedicated their whole life to the Lord. Frequent diligently, during Lent, the sermons and instruc-

tions, which are given more frequently during Lent than at other times,

## PART II.

The Lenten Masses differ, not essentially, but in their ceremonies, from other Masses.

1 They are said in vestments of violet color. The forty days' fast is a time of penance hence the violet color, for every dark color, black as well as violet, indicates mourning, penitential mourning, for our sins. Therefore we read in Church history, that the penitents in former times wore black, or generally dark garments, by which they gave expression to their sorrow for the sins they had committed.

The altars during Lent are also draped with violet. These curtains represent to us the sad truth that sin raised a partition between us and God, who is represented by the altar, and that we can not come to him so long as sin is not expiated by true repentance. These violet curtains are removed on Easter Sunday, because Jesus has finished the work of our Redemption, blotted out sin and reopened the gates of heaven, but the Church presupposes that by true repentance during Lent we have made ourselves worthy of the grace of Redemption. The violet vestments and curtains should therefore be to us a powerful admonition to penance.

2 The Lenten Masses have no "*Gloria*," for the Gloria is a joyful chant, which does not suit times of penance. For this reason the Church has prohibited the solemnizing of marriage, and all other public enjoyments whatever. How could we give ourselves to such worldly enjoyments, when Lent reminds us of sin and the evil connected with it on the one hand, and of the bitter Passion and death of Christ on the other. Truly, he who in this serious time lives frivolously and runs after the pleasures of the world, proves only too plainly that he has lost all Christian feeling, that he does not regard the evil and wretchedness which sin has caused us, and that he is entirely indifferent to the boundless love with which Jesus went for us unto death. The word of Christ aptly applies to such Christians: "Woe to you that laugh now for you shall mourn and weep."—*Luke 6: 25*

3 In Lent we have a *proper Preface*, in which is said: 'By the corporeal fast thou tamest the vices, elevatest the mind, givest virtue and reward.' Fasting, in truth, procures these great advantages. *It tames vices* the lust to sin, by weakening the desires of the flesh, and by strengthening the spirit, that it can the better maintain its dominion over the body and its desires. *It elevates the mind*, for it frees the soul from the burthen and fetters of the body so that without hindrance it

can raise itself to God. *It gives virtue*, by weakening sensuality and strengthening the spirit, it fits us for the practice of Christian virtues and for leading a pious life; and lastly, *it gives reward*, for it is one of the three good works particularly recommended in Scripture, which are rewarded with many graces here and with eternal life hereafter. Who, with these good works in view, will not cheerfully keep the precept of the Church?

4. In the Lenten Masses the priest says before the prayer after communion: "*Humiliate capita vestra Deo*," "*Humble your heads before God*." By these words we are admonished to humble ourselves most profoundly before God. When we sinned, we elevated, raised ourselves, and said, in deed if not in word: "I will not serve. If we wish to reconcile ourselves with God, we must, like the prodigal son, humble ourselves before him.

5. At the conclusion of the Mass, the priest says: "*Benedicamus Domino*," "Let us bless the Lord." As mentioned before, the faithful in former times, in Lent, and on other days of penance, did not leave the church immediately after Mass, but remained for some time, in order to participate in the prayers which were said by the clergy after Mass. The priest therefore did not say: "*Ite missa est*," "Go, the Mass is ended," but, "*Benedicamus Domino*," "Let us bless the Lord." Let us now remain in church for some time longer in order to devote ourselves to the exercises of devotion for the honor and praise of the Lord.

#### PERORATION.

May God grant that you may consider and practice what I have said to you on the Lenten Masses. The Church, by ordaining a proper Mass with a proper Epistle and Gospel for every day of Lent, admonishes you to spend these days as Sundays and holidays, which also have a proper Mass. Although you are not obliged in Lent to abstain from servile work as on Sundays and holidays, you must abstain from dissipation and sin, which are more abominable than servile work on holidays. As the Church has ordained in the Lenten Masses some things which differ from the Masses of other times, she calls upon you to lead a penitential life, for all these differences designate the forty days' fast as a time of penance. Sanctify Lent, therefore, and bring forth fruits worthy of penance. Amen.



## FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

## 5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

FIVE LOAVES OF BREAD FOR THE SANCTIFICATION OF MAN.

*"There is a boy here that hath five barley loaves."—John 6: 9.*

In the gospel for this day we see our Lord surrounded by a multitude of more than five thousand people, who never tire in hearing his holy word. The day is already far spent, and they have not had anything to eat, yet there seems to be no probability that they will get a morsel of food, for, far and near, there is not even a hut to be seen. The Apostles and their Master are poor; it would have been a great expense to buy bread for them all, and even if they had the money, where could they buy any, since they were so far away from human habitations? But stop, there is a boy here that hath five barley loaves—but what is that for so many! not five, but five thousand loaves, should they have to satisfy the hungry multitude. But behold! these five loaves in the hands of Jesus are multiplied in such a manner that they not only suffice to satisfy all the people, but that more is left than there was in the beginning, for they filled twelve baskets with the fragments.

## PART I.

We possess five loaves of bread, which have a still more miraculous effect than the five loaves that were blessed by Christ, for our five loaves nourish our soul for eternal life.

*The bread of doctrine.* The bread of doctrine has two effects:

1. *It enlightens man, so that he knows what is for his salvation.* "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths."—*Ps.* 118: 105. How this bread of doctrine or the word of God enlightens men, we see in David. This king had the misfortune of committing two very grievous sins, adultery and murder. One would think that a man who was so well versed in the divine law as David, should at once have seen the greatness of his sin and understood into what misery his passion had plunged him. But no, he lived calmly for weeks and months, and probably would never have come to the knowledge of himself, if Nathan the Prophet had not healed him of his blindness. One day he goes before the king, and, with emphatic words, upbraids him with his crime: and behold! the scales fall from his eyes, and his sin stands

before him in all its heinousness, and full of compunction, he says: "I have sinned against the Lord."—*II Kings* 12: 13. We have another example in the Jews at Jerusalem. When Peter for the first time preached to them the Gospel on the feast of Pentecost, "they had compunction in their heart," then they understood the grievousness of their sin in having crucified Jesus, and they said to Peter and the other Apostles. "What shall we do, men, brethren?" And Peter said to them: "Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins." They, therefore, who received his word, were baptized.—*Acts* 2. Thus the word of God enlightens to-day yet. How many sinners by hearing a sermon come to the knowledge of the wretched and dangerous condition of their soul, and resolve to do penance!

2. *It moves him to conversion.* The Apostle expresses this with these words: 'For the word of God is living and effectual and more penetrating than a two-edged sword; and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also, and the marrow'—*Heb.* 4: 12. St. Jerome says: 'The preaching of the word of God is a plough, which loosens the soil of the soul, pulls up the roots of vice, and softens the hardness of the heart.' St. Peter Damian: "The word of God is a fire that expels coldness and gives warmth to the soul, it is a hammer that softens the hardness of obstinacy" History and experience attest the efficacy of the word of God. Father James Laynes converted upon one occasion, by a sermon on Mary Magdalen, eight women, who had publicly led a shameless life. Father Avila, in a single sermon on the forgiveness of injuries and offenses, made so great an impression upon his hearers that those who had lived in enmity sought each other during the sermon, and, bathed in tears, mutually gave each other their hands for reconciliation. And how often does it not happen, even in our days, that the word of God which is preached falls upon good ground and bears fruit. The preacher by all possible means tries to make an impression upon the hearts of sinners; he terrifies them by the tremendous judgment that awaits the impenitent sinner, he encourages them by pointing to God's infinite mercy, he describes to them the unhappy state of the sinner here and hereafter, the inexpressible felicity of the penitent and the just man, and endeavors to lead them back to God, now by the joys of heaven, now by the torments of hell. And sinners by the aid of God's grace return to themselves and enter on the way of penance. Truly, the word of God is bread, which nourishes our soul for eternal life. Accept this bread, as often as it is offered to you, with a grateful heart, and employ it for your salvation.

## PART II.

*The bread of good example.*

This bread is more excellent than that of doctrine, for example is better than precept actions speak louder than words. It is the good example that—

1. *Fills worldings and sinners with wholesome confusion.* As the poor, while looking at the treasures of the crown, feel their poverty more sensibly, so we also must understand and feel more keenly our poverty and sinfulness, the more the Saints shine before us by their bright example. Oh, my Christian friend, if you consider the humility of the Saints, which went so far *that they rejoiced* when they were treated as the vilest of men, their meekness, which even by the grossest offenses could not be overcome; their love of God, which was prepared any moment to sacrifice for Christ everything, even life; their charity, which found its happiness in wiping away the tears of poverty and wretchedness; and if you compare yourselves with them, must you not, full of shame, cast down your eyes and sigh: Oh, what were the Saints, and what am I! And this shame, which the example of holy and pious Christians awakens in us, will urge us to correct our faults, quit sin, and work out our salvation with greater fervor. Venerable Louis of Granada was one day disciplining himself. Two young men who were leading a life of debauchery saw it just when on their way to a house of ill-fame. The sight made the deepest impression upon them. They said: This saint, who lives like an angel, chastises his body, and we serve the lowest passions of the flesh! What kind of men are we? And they were filled with so great and holy a horror against their past life that they renounced it at once, made a general confession to Father Louis, and henceforward served God with great fervor.

2. *Gives them courage and strength to control their passions and to renounce their sinful life.* Weak plants, such as vines, ivy, which can not raise themselves up, take hold of stronger plants or trees, in order to rise up on them. In like manner, good example serves imperfect persons and sinners as supports, to which they cling and raise themselves up. St. Augustine was for many years a slave of the meanest passions; by little and little he came to see how damnable his life was, but he felt too weak to break the fetters of sin. He considered the lives of the Saints, and saw that thousands of them in the midst of the world, and under the greatest temptations, preserved their innocence; he saw that great sinners tore themselves away from vice, and dedicated the rest of their life to God in the exercises of the most austere penance;—and behold, these examples gave him courage, so that, full of

determination he exclaimed: "If these could, why can not I?" And from that moment he bade farewell to his worldly and sinful life, entered courageously on the way of penance, and became a great saint. And how many may there be among us to whom good example was the impulse to conversion? They saw, for example, how, at a mission, or a Jubilee, one person and another gave up his sinful acquaintance, his night-walking, his drinking and gambling, etc., made a good general confession, and become totally converted—and this example encouraged them to do the same.

3. *Powerfully works upon them, to amend themselves.* Abraham the hermit for a long time had taken all possible pains to convert the unbelievers, but no success was apparent. But when he received strokes and calumnies which he was obliged to suffer from them with all patience, they felt themselves drawn to him with irresistible love. "Behold," they said, "the patience of this man: behold his love for us; in all the tribulations and injuries, he perseveres in the preaching of his doctrine. If his words were not of God, he certainly would not suffer so much for them. Come, let us believe in the God that he preaches to us." Yes, example is far better than precept, and, as St. Leo the Great says, we teach better by actions than by words. St. Chrysostom does not hesitate to say that by good example more souls are converted than by miracles, and that without the example of the good almost all sinners would be lost.

From this a double lesson follows for us; first, we must look only to pious Christians and imitate them, and secondly, we must let our light shine in all our actions by means of a good example: "Be thou an example of the faithful, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in chastity, that thy proficiency may be manifest to all."—*1 Tim. 4: 12-13.*

### PART III.

*The bread of tribulation.* Very few care for this bread, and when we pray: "Give us this day our daily bread," there is, surely, not one among us who entertains the will and desire that God should send him afflictions and tribulations for his daily bread. And yet it is an incontrovertible truth, that tribulation is very good bread, and that without this bread it would be almost impossible to obtain the life of grace here and the life of glory hereafter. The bread of tribulation is very wholesome—

1. *For sinners.* If they had all good days, they would never resolve to give up their worldly and sinful life. We see it with our own eyes, that most sinners, as long as things go according to their wish, never

think of penance and conversion. They despise the interior inspirations of grace, neglect many occasions which are given to them for penance, *disdain* the means of salvation, such as the word of God and the Sacraments or abuse them for the still greater offense of God. Then God sends them tribulations, and these it is that put a stop to their sinful life. If they are reduced to poverty, rejected and abandoned by all, are prostrated full of woe upon a sick-bed, then they learn how deceitful the world is, and how vain and perishable everything earthly; they also see themselves deprived of strength, means, and opportunity to continue their sinful life. Thus, with the aid of divine grace they come by little and little to the turning-point, where they abandon the world and sin, and like the prodigal son (*Luke 15: 17-20*) full of contrition and compunction, return to God and their father's house. On the general judgment day we shall see with astonishment, how many sinners owe their salvation to the bread of tribulation

2 *To the just.* If in summer the air is calm for a long time, various injurious vapors are formed, from which great storms, with thunder and lightning, or even plagues and sicknesses, result. It would be so in the life of men, if they always enjoyed good times, they would forget God more and more, become heedless, and fall into the snares of the devil. As long as David was obliged to undergo the fatigues of wars, and nowhere had rest, he walked in the fear of God; when afterwards he had rest and enjoyment in his palace, he went so far astray that he committed murder and adultery. And what effect had prosperity on King Solomon? Ah! the once so wise and pious king defiled himself with idolatry. How good is it therefore, that God gives the bread of tribulation also to the just to taste, for this bread is to them an excellent means of virtue, because it draws their hearts from the world, enlivens and strengthens their fervor in the service of God, and stimulates them to aspire to heavenly goods. We are chastised by the Lord, that we may not be damned with this world — *I Cor 11: 32*

Whether you belong to the sinners or to the just, receive cheerfully the bread of tribulation which God gives you, and eat it, though it be coarse and bitter to the taste. Consider that Christ himself entered into his glory by suffering, and no other way leads you to heaven than the way of the cross. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me — *Matt. 16: 24*

#### PART IV.

*The bread of confession.* Daniel was cast into the lions' den. For six days he sat there among seven ferocious lions, although they

did not harm him, he was in danger of dying of hunger. God had compassion on him and sent the Prophet Habacuc to him, who brought him the dinner prepared for the reapers.—*Dan.* 14: 30-38. Such a Habacuc with bread God sends to the sinner, who lies in the den of the seven deadly sins and in imminent danger of death. This Habacuc with the bread is the priest, who rescues the sinner from eternal death, in the Sacrament of Penance. Oh, how thankful we should be to our Lord for this bread. If we make a good confession we receive—

1. *The forgiveness of all sins committed after baptism*, be they ever so grievous or numerous, for Christ says in general terms: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven."—*John* 20: 23. And again: "Whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven."—*Matt.* 18: 18. If one had as many mortal sins on his conscience as there are stars in the firmament of heaven, they are forgiven him if he makes a good confession, the moment the priest pronounces over him the words of absolution. To him the words of the prophet apply: "If the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed, living he shall live and shall not die. I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done."—*Ezech.* 18: 21, 22.

2. *The remission of the eternal, and a part of the temporal punishment.* He that commits a mortal sin, renders himself guilty of the eternal punishment of hell, and he will most certainly incur it if he does not obtain the remission of the sin. But he that makes a good confession receives, besides the forgiveness of sin, the remission of the eternal punishment, though he may have deserved it a thousand times. Can a greater grace be thought of? And is it not also a great grace, that in confession the punishments of purgatory are at least partly remitted?

3. *Sanctifying grace, and with it adoption as sons by God and the right to heaven.* The soul of him who makes a good confession is not only cleansed from the stains of sin, but also adorned with sanctifying grace, God, who beholds in the soul of the justified man his image again, takes pleasure in him and gives him his love. He even adopts him as his son, and gives him the right and title to heaven with all its joys. Oh, how happy is the sinner, even the greatest sinner, who makes a good confession! You all know what is necessary for a good confession. Endeavor always, and especially in Easter time, to confess candidly, sincerely, and with compunction of heart.

## PART V.

*The bread of holy communion.* Of this bread Christ says. I am the living bread, which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this

bread, he shall live for ever, and the bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world."—*John* 6: 51, 52. With these words our divine Saviour expresses—

1. *What kind of bread he gives us.* "The bread which I will give is my flesh." The bread, therefore, which is given us in holy communion is not a real bread like that with which he fed the five thousand men in the desert; it has only the form of bread, but in reality is the body of Christ, or Christ himself, true God and true man. Christ himself, the eternal truth, is our guarantee. God had shown a great grace to the Israelites in the desert, where he daily fed them with the manna; but how infinitely greater is the grace which we Christians receive in holy communion, where we truly receive Christ himself, the incarnate Son of God, as he sits at the right hand of God! Oh! this is a grace of which the angels are not deemed worthy, for they are allowed only to behold Jesus, but not to receive him.

2. *What effects this bread produces in us.* "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever." Therefore, the effect of holy communion is life everlasting. He that communes worthily, preserves the *life of grace upon earth*. For holy communion, as the Council of Trent says, has the special effect of preserving us from mortal sin. The reason is, because holy communion, on the one hand, weakens our predominant passion and our natural inclination to evil, and, on the other, strengthens us that we may overcome all the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. He that preserves the life of grace upon earth, has the assurance that he shall receive *life everlasting in heaven*. Therefore, by holy communion we become partakers of the greatest goods we can wish for, sanctifying grace and everlasting life.

And yet there are so many Christians who have not the least desire for holy communion, Christians who stay away from the table of the Lord for a whole year, and would not even communicate at Easter if they were not, as it were, compelled to do so by a precept of the Church. Oh, follow not in the footsteps of these lukewarm, negligent Christians; on the contrary, esteem yourselves happy that you have the opportunity of being able to go often to communion, but at every communion think of the words of the Apostle: "Let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice, for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself not discerning the body of the Lord."—*I. Cor.* 11: 28, 29.

#### PERORATION.

These are the five loaves of bread which the grace of God has prepared for the nourishment of your soul. Accept them with a grate-

ful heart from the hand of God and employ them for your salvation. Love to hear the word of God, which is preached to you so often, and make it the rule of your life. Look frequently at the example of the Saints and pious Christians, in order to be encouraged by it to the service of God. Follow Christ gladly on the way of the cross, that you may also be allowed to follow him into the glory of heaven. Receive the holy Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist frequently and always with a heart well prepared, that thus you may become partakers of the great graces which are connected with the worthy reception of these holy Sacraments. Amen.

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#### FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT.

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### 6. MORAL SKETCH.

#### HOW WE ARE TO GO TO COMMUNION.

*"Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed to them that were set down."—John 6: 11.*

The Church reads for us to-day the Gospel of the miraculous multiplying of bread, in order to direct our attention to the Most Holy Eucharist, which we are to receive in Easter time. The Lord had wrought a great miracle by multiplying five loaves of bread and two fishes, so that five thousand men besides the women and children, were filled, and twelve baskets of fragments remained. But Christ works a still greater and more glorious miracle at Easter. He gives us in holy communion, not earthly bread, but himself, his sacred flesh and precious blood, as he assures us: "The bread which I will give, is my flesh for the life of the world."—*John 6: 52* He feeds, not only five thousand people, but many millions. He feeds all Catholics who approach his table of grace. He gives us a food which nourishes the soul and infuses into the mortal body the germ of immortality and glory, as he again assures us: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."—*John 6: 55.*

Oh, that we all would receive this divine food worthily in this holy time of Easter! Oh, that there would be none who communicate sacrilegiously! As St. Gregory the Great informs us, it was a custom in the early days of Christianity for a deacon to say out with a loud voice to the faithful when they went to Communion: *Come with faith, fear,*



*and love.* These words contain the best instruction for a worthy communion. Let us meditate on these words to-day. We must go to communion—

- I. With faith;*
- II. With fear,*
- III. With love.*

#### PART I.

To receive communion worthily, a *living faith* is necessary.

1. God forbade our first parents in paradise to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and threatened them with death if they should eat of it. But they believed the father of lies rather than the word of eternal truth, they disbelieved that the eating of the forbidden fruit would bring them death, they therefore took of it and ate. The cause of their sin and death, which came upon them and their whole posterity, was *unbelief*. Now we have in the garden of the Church another tree, the fruit of which we must eat in order to recover the eternal life which was forfeited by the eating of the forbidden fruit. This tree of life with its precious fruit is holy communion. But that we may eat this fruit for our salvation, we must firmly believe what the Catholic Church teaches concerning it. We must believe that the sacred Host, which the priest gives us in holy communion, is truly Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, that the sacred Host, which appears to our senses as bread, in reality is not bread, but the God-Man Jesus Christ—the same Jesus Christ that once lived upon earth and now sits at the right hand of God in heaven, and that nothing remains of the bread but only the form: finally, that Jesus Christ is not present, *dead*, so that he does not see or hear, but *living*, with all his divine and human perfections and attributes. If one would not believe or would voluntarily doubt these and other truths which the Catholic Church teaches on the Blessed Eucharist, the food of life would be changed for him into deadly poison, he would share the lot of our first parents, who, because they did not believe, took of the forbidden fruit, and ate death to themselves.

1 Perhaps you will say. Well, we are not destitute of faith. I grant it, but is your faith a living faith? Are you, as often as you go to communion, penetrated by this thought: I am now before Jesus, my Lord and my God. I will now receive him into my heart before whom Peter prostrated himself, exclaiming "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man."—*Luke 5 8* I will receive him whom the heavenly spirits adore in the profoundest veneration. This living faith is required for communion. Whence does it come that many Chris-

tians are so cold, so void of devotion, and so distracted when they come to the table of the Lord? Undoubtedly from the fact that their faith is not living, they frequently are not conscious of their faith, they do not think of the presence of their God and Saviour. Hence their distractions and want of devotion, hence also the deplorable fact that they reap little or no benefit from holy communion. Yes, want of faith is the reason why many Christians receive communion unworthily. If they would seriously consider what they receive in holy communion, what sin they commit by receiving communion unworthily, and what terrible consequences an unworthy communion draws after it, they would not dare approach the table of the Lord with an unclean conscience. But because they do not consider all this, and consequently have no living faith, they care little or nothing whether they communicate sacrilegiously or not. They are on the day of their communion, on which they have sinned so grievously, and laid perhaps, the foundation for their eternal damnation, as calm and cheerful as if they had no reason to accuse themselves of the least wrong. Oh, blind and deluded souls!

How necessary, then is it that, at our communions, in order to receive them worthily and profitably, we have not only faith, but a living faith! Let us, therefore, recollect ourselves before we go to communion, and consider what we are doing when we go to communion, and who he is whom we receive, that our faith may be a living faith.

## PART II.

We frequently read in the Gospel, that people were seized with fear when Christ manifested his Godhead by a miracle. We need not wonder at that; how could weak, sinful man not be filled with a holy awe when he beheld himself in the presence of God? It is also very natural that we should approach the table of the Lord *with fear*. This fear is very salutary, because it urges us to communicate *with a pure conscience and with veneration*.

1 Christ, at the Last Supper, before instituting the Blessed Eucharist, washed his disciples' feet, and thereby indicated that we must approach communion with a clean heart. It is truly a most solemn act to receive God, who is holiness itself, into our hearts. In order to receive communion worthily, we should have, not merely a human, but a divine cleanness and holiness. But because such a cleanness is impossible for us, we must endeavor to the best of our ability to cleanse our heart from every stain of sin. It is absolutely necessary that we are free from *every mortal sin* when we go to communion. He that knows he is defiled with a mortal sin, or could and should know it, and yet goes to communion, commits a horrible sacrilege; he renews the crime

of the Jews who crucified Christ, and eats and drinks judgment to himself.—*1. Cor. 11. 27-29.* "A great crime among Christians, a crime that draws down terrible punishment on itself, is the unworthy reception of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in the Sacrament of his love. The desecrators of this adorable Sacrament will drink the chalice of divine revenge throughout all eternity."—*St. John Damascene.*

Alas! it is to be feared that not a few will receive communion unworthily in this Easter time. And who will they be? Those who confess without contrition and a resolution of amendment, who are therefore not determined to shun the occasions of sin, to give up their sinful familiarity, to stay away from the places and company where they have frequently sinned grievously, to quit their bad habits, for example, of cursing, blaspheming, getting drunk, and using immodest language. Those will communicate sacrilegiously who do not restore ill-gotten goods, who do not desist from their injustices in dealing with others and do not become reconciled to their neighbor, lastly, those who knowingly and willingly conceal a mortal sin in confession, diminish the number of their sins, or palliate or excuse a mortal sin that it appears only as a venial one. All these confess sacrilegiously, and, consequently, if they go to communion after such a sacrilegious confession, they make themselves guilty of a still greater sacrilege, greater by far than the Jews were guilty of when they shed the blood of Jesus and trampled it under their feet. Let us all consider this and in this time of Easter endeavor to cleanse our conscience by a sincere and contrite confession, that we may be enabled to communicate worthily.

2. We must go to the table of the Lord with *veneration*. If we conduct ourselves before the great of this world with becoming decorum, and are careful not to violate due respect, with what veneration should we be filled when we approach God himself and receive him into our heart! In this holy action, above all, beware of the least levity or disrespect. Show in your whole exterior the holy fear by which you are penetrated. Cast down your eyes, fold your hands, say your prayers on your knees, and dare not to approach indecently and improperly dressed the table of him who has said: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." Say, not only with your lips, but also from the bottom of your heart: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."

### PART III.

Christ was not content with becoming man, teaching us, and finally suffering and dying for us; he also instituted the Blessed Eucharist, in order, after he had gone to his heavenly Father, to dwell among us—

nay, to come into our heart and to unite himself most intimately with us, that we might become, as it were, one with him, and might say with the Apostle: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me."—*Gal.* 2. 20. This is a love which we may admire, but can never comprehend. If Christ so loved us, what kind of men should we be if we did not love him, and if the most ardent love did not animate us as often as we have the happiness of receiving Jesus in holy communion.

1. But how does this love manifest itself? Principally *by an ardent desire to unite ourselves with Jesus in holy communion*. He that loves, wishes to be united with the object of his love. If, therefore, we love Christ, we will long with the greatest ardor for holy communion, because this enables us to unite ourselves most intimately with our Saviour God. The Saints desired nothing so ardently as holy communion. When St. Philip Neri was lying on his death-bed, and the holy Viaticum was given him, he exclaimed: "Behold here my love, behold here my love, oh, give me my love!"

2. Where there is love, there is a desire for Christ in holy communion, and the greater and more ardent the love, the greater and more ardent is also the desire. What then shall I say of those Christians who wait a whole year and even longer without having a desire for holy communion; of Christians who, although they go to communion at Easter, do not do it as if they had a desire for communion, but because the Church commands it, of Christians to whom Easter is the most distasteful season of the year, because they can not well withdraw themselves from confession and communion; of Christians who, if Easter were to be every ten years, would go to confession and communion only every ten years? What else can we say of them than that they have no love at all for Jesus, that they receive communion either unworthily, or without profit? Look into your own heart and ask yourselves: How do matters stand with me? Have I a desire for communion? And accordingly as you must affirm or deny the question, you can easily judge whether you love Jesus or not, whether you receive communion worthily and profitably or not.

#### PERORATION.

In conclusion, I beg you to consider that on your conduct towards Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist and at holy communion, depends the salvation of your soul. Make, therefore, the resolution to-day, to go to communion at Easter time, and at all times, with *faith, fear, and love*. Communicate *with faith*, saying: Jesus, my Lord and my God, is present; I receive him, the infinitely holy; my Redeemer and Judge. Communicate *with fear*, examine whether your heart is free

from every mortal sin, for the infinitely pure and immaculate God can not dwell in an impure heart. Communicate *with love* and therefore excite within yourselves an ardent desire to be united with Jesus in communion and as often as your situation allows it. Communicate, not only at Easter, but frequently during the year, with *faith, fear, and love*, then you will always communicate worthily, and the word of Christ will be verified in you: 'He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.'—*John* 6: 55. Amen.

#### FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT.

### 7. MORAL SKETCH.

#### CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE.

*"Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to them that were set down."—John 6: 11.*

In the gospel for this day, Christ exhibits himself as the best friend and benefactor of men. After healing the infirm who were brought to him, he went over the Sea of Galilee, again to do good. There, in the desert, where a great multitude had gathered around him, he soon found an opportunity of showing his charity and mercy. The people were hungry; they had eaten nothing all day, it was very near evening, and they were yet fasting. What does Christ do? By his omnipotence he works a great miracle, multiplies five loaves of bread and two fishes, so that five thousand were satiated.

This wonderful occurrence is not to be the mere recital of a story: no, it is more, it is an example—nay, a commandment—for us; for Christ is our pattern, and what he has done, we must do also, as he says himself: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also."—*John* 13: 15. I will speak to-day of Christian benevolence, and explain to you—

- I. That we must be benevolent;*
- II. That we can be benevolent.*

#### PART I.

Benevolence is considered by all a beautiful and commendable virtue, but many will not believe that we *are obliged* to practice this virtue.

And yet it is so. We have the strict duty to be benevolent, and he that does not comply with this duty can scarcely be saved.

1. *Reason* convinces us of this truth. God has given the earth to men for their common possession, as a father leaves his property to all his children in common. "This earth is nothing else than the common inheritance of men." The distinction between *mine* and *thine* was first introduced by the law of nations. God sanctioned the division and appropriation of the originally common goods, but so that the rich and wealthy should not leave their poor brethren in a helpless condition. "The rich," says St. Gregory, "must give of their abundance to the poor, for they are not the masters, but only the stewards of the goods entrusted to them." The proprietor of all we have is God; we have the strict duty to make use of everything according to his will. But he has given us much, for no other reason than that we should of our abundance succor the needy and suffering. The steward acts unjustly when he uses the goods entrusted to him against the will of the proprietor: we do the same, if, of our abundance, we do not give to the poor. "Defraud not the poor of alms, and turn not away thy eyes from the poor."—*Eccles.* 4: 1. St. Basil replied to a miser, who said that he was doing no wrong by keeping his own. 'You say you are doing no wrong by keeping your own. What belongs to you? Did you not come forth naked from your mother's womb? Will you not return into the earth? Whence did you get your present possessions? If you say: by a fortuitous accident, you are impious, because you do not know your Creator. But if you admit that you have received it from God, forget not for what purpose God gave it to you. God is not unjust; by blessing you with affluence, and placing another in poverty, he wished that you should obtain the reward of mercy and of a faithful stewardship, and he the reward of conformity to his holy will.'

2. *The natural law which God has written in every man's heart.* This law reads: "What you wish that others should do to you, do you also to them." What does every man wish when he is in necessity? Is it not that he be succored? He, therefore, who is not benevolent, and does not assist the poor and indigent, sins against the natural law. We see that those who had no special revelation from God were convinced of the duty of benevolence and practiced it. Job lived among the Gentiles and before the time of Moses; he had, therefore, and could have, no knowledge of the Mosaic law, and yet he said: "If I have denied to the poor what they desired, and have made the eyes of the widow wait, if I have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; if I have despised him that was perishing for want of clothing, and the poor man that had no covering . . . let my shoulder fall

from its joint, and let my arm with its bones be broken."—*Job* 31: 16-22. The better-disposed among the Gentiles who observed the natural law, showed themselves benevolent towards the poor, and succored the needy. The Emperor Titus considered every day lost on which he had no opportunity of doing a favor to somebody, saying: "*Diem perdidit*" (I have lost a day.) What then do you do, O Christian, who shut your ear to the entreaties of the poor, the widow and the orphans? You sin against the natural law, and put yourself below the Gentiles.

3. *The Old Law of the Jews.* As imperfect as this law was, being given for a rude, coarse people, it contained a multitude of ordinances which most emphatically inculcated mercy to the poor and needy. Thus, this law decreed that the land should not be tilled in the seventh year, and whatever would grow spontaneously should be given to the poor.—*Ex.* 23: 11. They were also not to cut the corn to the very ground, nor to gather the ears that remained, but some were to be left for the poor and for the strangers.—*Lev.* 23: 22. To induce the Israelites to be benevolent, God promised them the greatest rewards for the exercise of this virtue, and threatened them with the greatest punishments if they would be hard and unmerciful towards the poor. "He that giveth to the poor, shall not want; he that despiseth this entreaty, shall suffer indigence."—*Prov.* 28: 27. "He that stoppeth his ear against the cry of the poor, shall also cry himself, and shall not be heard."—*Prov.* 21: 13.

4. *The New Law of the Christians.* Christ placed the love of our neighbor side by side with the love of God, and declared it a new law, by the observance of which we must show ourselves to be his disciples: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. . . . By this all men shall know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another."—*John* 13: 34, 35. Benevolence is an exercise of love; he, therefore, who is not benevolent and merciful towards the poor, has no love, and violates the principal law of Christ. Hence St. John says: "He that hath the substance of the world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him, how doth the charity of God abide in him?"—*I. John* 3: 17.

This is also evident from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. It is said of the rich man, that when he died he was buried in hell, and was grievously tormented in the flames. He died a bad death and was condemned to the everlasting torments of hell. And why? Was it on account of various grievous sins which he had committed? No, for such are not laid to his charge in the parable, the reason of his con-

demnation is to be sought in his want of mercy to poor Lazarus, who lay at his gate, full of sores, desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, and no one did give him. Because he left this poor man without help, he was damned. Therefore, St. Augustine says: "Reflect on what happened to Dives, who was clothed in purple and fine linen; he was not condemned because he had appropriated to himself the goods of others, but because he gave not of his substance to poor Lazarus; cast into hell, he was obliged to beg *a drop* of water, because he had refused on earth *a crumb* of bread."

Moreover, our Saviour declares most emphatically, that the omission of works of mercy is a *sin*, which draws eternal damnation after it. Will not the Judge say to those who stand at his left: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink; naked, and you clothed me not." And to the question of the reprobate: "Lord, when did we see thee hungry, or thirsty, or naked, and did not minister to thee?" he shall answer them: "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it unto me."—*Matt.* 25: 41-45. Here it is plainly said, that not only thieves, robbers, murderers, fornicators, adulterers, extortioners, and other great sinners, shall go to hell, but also those who are unmerciful to the poor and needy. Christian charity, then, is not only a counsel, but a duty, a strict precept, on the observance of which depends life everlasting. The question now is: "Can we fulfil this law and be benevolent?"

## PART II.

Of whatever state of life we are, in whatever circumstances we live, we can be benevolent.

1. To fulfil the duty of benevolence, it is not required that *we give much*; it suffices to *give what we are able*. The rule which the elder Tobias gave to his son holds good: "If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little."—*Tob.* 4: 9. Those also who have not much, can fulfil the duty of Christian benevolence, for God regards more the will than the deed. That poor widow who put only two mites into the treasury, put in more comparatively than all the others, some of whom put in much, for, as Jesus says: "They all cast in of their abundance, but she, of her want, cast in all she had, even her whole living."—*Mark* 12: 41-43. He that gives the little that he is able to give willingly and cheerfully, has greater merit before God than have the rich who, frequently from ostentation rather than for the love of God, give great alms.



2. Christ reckons among the works of benevolence such as *even the poorest can give*. He says: "I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink." Where is there a man so poor that he can not give a drink of water to a thirsty man? It is frequently something small, insignificant, wherewith we can do an important act of kindness and charity. Examples: Rebecca, who gave to the servant of Abraham and his camels to drink.—*Gen. 24: 17*, etc. Moses, who protected the daughters of the priest of Madian against the violent shepherds, so that they could water their sheep and return home early.—*Exodus 2: 16*, etc.

3. Christian charity can be exercised, not only by alms, but also by various other acts of kindness. If you, for instance, lend money to a man and thereby help him out of a difficulty, if you have patience with your debtor and give him time till he can pay his debt, if you procure work for a poor man who is able and willing to work, if by good counsel or recommendation you help him to get a situation, all these are exercises of Christian benevolence, and frequently are more beneficial than large alms.

4. Even those who have nothing can be benevolent; they need nothing for that but a good will. He that can give nothing to the poor and needy, can at least pity them and have compassion on them. St. Gregory Nazianzen says: "Give cheerfully and you have given much. But if you have nothing else, give tears. The compassion from a sincere heart is a precious remedy for the unfortunate." St. Gregory the Great calls compassion a more precious alms than any other gift, "for," says the saint, "he that gives money, gives what is without him; but he that gives sympathy to the unfortunate, gives something of himself." Therefore, also, St. Augustine says: "If you are able to give, give; if you can give nothing, give friendly words. The Lord crowns the good will, where he finds no worldly substance. Let nobody say: I have nothing, love is not taken out of the purse. If you can give nothing else, give sympathy, and God will receive your alms with pleasure."

5. Lastly, charity can be exercised by *prayer*. All Christians, even those who can be no longer active, as the aged and the sick, can pray with firm faith and ardent love; they can, if they will, pray always and everywhere, and our holy religion teaches us that by our fervent and believing prayer we can do more good to our fellow-men than by alms. In the year 350 the city of Nisibis was besieged by Sapor II., King of Persia; Jacob, the holy bishop of that city, mounted the wall of the city and implored the help of the Lord against the unbelievers. God heard his prayer, for suddenly there came swarms of flies which

crept into the trunks of the elephants and the ears of the beasts of burden, and made them so wild that they caused the greatest confusion in the camp, and Sapor was compelled to raise the siege.

## PERORATION.

There is no man upon earth, as you see, who can not in some way be merciful towards his neighbor; the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the healthy and the sick, the children and the aged,—all can practice the virtue of benevolence if they only have a good will. Let us, by the example of Christ, who, by multiplying bread in a miraculous manner, fed a great multitude, be encouraged to do good to all wherever and however we can. Let us also consider that hard-heartedness towards the poor and needy is a sin which God hates very much and severely punishes, and that we can hope for God's mercy if we show ourselves merciful and charitable towards our neighbor. St. Jerome says: "I do not remember ever to have read that he who had practiced works of mercy has died a bad death. Such a man has so many intercessors that it is impossible for their prayers to remain unheard." Be therefore merciful, and you shall obtain mercy. Amen.

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 PASSION SUNDAY.
 

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**EPISTLE.** *Heb. 9: 11, 15.* Brethren, Christ being present a high-priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation: Neither by the blood of goats, nor of calves, but by his own blood, entered once into the Holies having obtained eternal Redemption. For if the blood of goats and of, oxen, and the ashes of a heifer being sprinkled, sanctify such as are defiled, to the cleansing of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Holy Ghost offered himself unspotted unto God, cleanse our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God! And therefore he is the Mediator of the new testament: that by means of his death for the redemption of those transgressions, which were under the former testament, they that are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

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 I. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

## THE HIGH-PRIESTHOOD AND SACRIFICE OF JESUS.

The lesson for to-day is a small portion of that excellent Epistle which St. Paul wrote to the Hebrews, that is, to the Christians converted

from Judaism in Palestine. Among these Christians there were many who yet strongly clung to the Mosaic Law, who sought to unite the Jewish religion with the Christian, and who, therefore, wished to be Jews and Christians at one and the same time. Moreover, the Jews who stubbornly adhered to the old religion, and by nothing, not even by numberless miracles, could be induced to embrace the Catholic religion, had persecuted the newly-converted, their own brethren, in a terrible manner, depriving them of their property and reducing them to the greatest misery. These Jewish Christians needed very much to be instructed and strengthened in their faith. The Apostle did this in the Epistle which he wrote to them, and in which he showed them that the Jewish Law was abrogated and had given place to the Christian, and admonished them to constancy in faith. The lesson of this day contains the following two truths :

*I. That the high-priesthood of Christ is much more excellent than that of the Jews.*

*II. That the sacrifice of Christ is much more effectual than the sacrifices of the Jews.*

#### PART I.

1. The Apostle designates Jesus Christ as the high-priest of the *good things to come*. By these future goods we are to understand the treasures of grace which our divine Saviour has acquired for us, viz., the forgiveness of sin, sanctifying grace, the love and favor of God, and the inheritance of heaven. They are called *future goods*, especially in opposition to those goods for which the high-priest, in the Old Law, offered sacrifice. He could obtain for them by prayer and sacrifice temporal goods pertaining to this present life, but for the obtaining of the good things to come, which refer to the future life and make man eternally happy, he could do nothing. Here observe one prerogative of the high-priesthood of Jesus Christ superior to that of the Jews. The Jews could expect nothing from their high-priest but temporal and perishable things; we Christians have a high-priest out of whose hands not only temporal, but also supernatural and eternal, goods flow to us, for to him we owe everything that is necessary for our salvation.

If Jesus Christ is the high-priest of the good things to come, we must, above all things, desire these goods and aspire to them. To seek and love nothing but what the world has and gives, and to pray only for temporal things, would betray a low sentiment, unworthy of a Christian. We may, indeed, pray for temporal goods, such as life, health, prosperity, and esteem such goods and try to preserve them, but only in so far as they are necessary and beneficial for our salvation, or so far as they are not dangerous. Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all other things shall be added unto you, as far as they are conducive to your eternal welfare.

2. The Apostle says that "*Christ, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, entered once into the Holies.*" By tabernacle we understand, first, the holy tabernacle of the Israelites. This tabernacle was a portable temple, somewhat resembling a tent, and so constructed that it could be easily taken apart; it was similar to the tabernacle of pastoral tribes, and consisted of a *vestibule* and *sanctuary*. The vestibule, which was two hundred feet long and one hundred wide, was intended for the people as a place of prayer. After the vestibule came the sanctuary, which had two apartments, of which the smaller was called the Holy of Holies, and the larger, the sanctuary proper. The people were not allowed to enter into the sanctuary proper, but only the priests; but from the Holy of Holies even the priests were excluded. In it was the Ark of the Covenant, in which were placed the two tables of the Law, a vessel with manna, and Aaron's rod, and over which was the throne of grace. Only the high-priest was allowed once a year, on the great day of Expiation, to enter it, for the purpose of offering the prescribed sacrifice. The Apostle says: Christ is a greater high-priest than that of the Jews, because he entered by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, into the Holy of Holies. What kind of a tabernacle is this? According to most interpreters of the Sacred Scripture, this tabernacle is the *Church of Christ*. The Church of Christ is a *higher*, *i. e.*, a greater tabernacle, than that of the Jews, for it is extended over the whole earth, whilst the Jewish Church was confined to one people; she is more perfect, because she truly purifies her members from sin, sanctifies and educates them for eternal salvation, whilst the Jewish Church had no effectual means of salvation, and only prepared the way for Christianity; she is not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, as the tabernacle of the Jews, but founded by Jesus Christ, the God-Man. The sanctuary into which Jesus Christ entered after the accomplishment of his work of Redemption, is greater and more excellent than that into which the Jewish high-priest entered once a year, for it is heaven, where he sits at the right hand of his omnipotent Father.

We are so happy as to be in the tabernacle of Christ, in his holy Catholic Church. Let us conscientiously fulfil our duties as Catholics and diligently avail ourselves of the means of grace which the Church offers us, that we may one day have the happiness to enter with Jesus into the Holy of Holies, that is, into heaven.

3. The Apostle says that Christ entered not into the Holy of Holies by the blood of goats, nor of calves, but by his own blood. In the Old Law the high-priest entered the Holy of Holies on the feast of Expiation, carrying with him the blood of the slaughtered victim

with which he sprinkled the pavement in the sight of the Lord. Our High-priest did infinitely more: he did not offer goats and calves, but he immolated himself, shedding for us the last drop of his blood on the cross. What are all the sacrifices of the Jews compared with this?

Let us call to mind this sacrifice in this holy season of Lent, which is instituted in memory of the bitter Passion and death of Christ, and make the resolution, in grateful love, to make sacrifices. Let us mortify our inordinate inclinations, for example, vanity, anger, avarice, impurity, and bear with patience and resignation the hardships incident to our state of life; let us deprive ourselves of some meat, drink, or sleep, bridle our senses, especially the eyes and the tongue; these are sacrifices which please our Saviour and merit many graces for us.

4. Lastly, the Apostle says: "*Jesus entered once into the sanctuary, having obtained eternal redemption.*" In the Old Law, the sacrifices of oxen, goats, and calves were constantly renewed, the high-priest was obliged to enter into the Holy of Holies every year, to offer the sacrifice of Expiation and to sprinkle the blood. It is quite different in the New Law. Our High-priest need not renew his sacrifice yearly and again shed his blood; only once he entered into the Holy of Holies, only once he offered himself for us on the cross a bleeding victim, and effected thereby eternal redemption. The blood which he once shed on the cross redeemed the whole human race for all time. What our Saviour acquired and merited by his sacrifice on the cross can be destroyed neither by the malice of men nor by the cunning of the devil. Notwithstanding that countless sins are daily committed, the sacrifice which Jesus offered for us on the altar of the cross, enables all men, even those who groan in the deepest misery of sin, to obtain forgiveness and to be saved. This holy sacrifice Christ renews daily by the hands of his priests in the holy Mass, and by it he makes all merits flow to us, which he has acquired by his bloody sacrifice on the cross. Moreover, he is also our Mediator with the Father in heaven, wherefore St. John writes: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the just; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world."—1. *John, 2: 12.*

Thus the priesthood of Jesus Christ transcends that of the Jews as wide and as far as heaven is from earth, for the latter was but a shadow and type of the former, and was to cease as soon as Christ, our High-priest, had offered his sacrifice on the cross. For this reason at the death of Christ the veil of the temple was rent in twain, to signify that the old priesthood, with its sacrifices, had been abrogated.

## PART II.

To show that the sacrifice of Christ is more effectual than that of the Jews, the Apostle first describes the effects of the sacrifices of the Old Law, and then the effects of the sacrifice in the New Law.

1. He says that: "*the blood of goats and of oxen, and the ashes of a heifer being sprinkled, sanctify such as are defiled to the cleansing of the flesh.*" St. Paul speaks here of the sacrifices of the Jews and the purifications according to the law. The blood of goats and oxen served, on the feast of Expiation especially, which was celebrated every year on the tenth day of the seventh month, for the cleansing of the holy place from the uncleanness of the children of Israel, of the high-priest and his family, and of all the people. The high-priest offered a calf as a sacrifice for the sins of himself and his house, and two buck-goats for the sins of the people before the sanctuary. Then he slaughtered the calf and one of the goats, upon which the lot had fallen, and, entering into the Holy of Holies, sprinkled, first with the blood of the calf and then with the blood of the goat, the ark and the pavement before it; then he sprinkled, with the blood of both, the golden altar of incense and its four horns, in order to purify the holy place from the sins of the Israelites. Lastly, he offered a burnt offering and sin offering.—*Lev. 23*. With the blood of the animals offered in sacrifices also at other times, places and persons that were legally impure were sprinkled, in order to be purified again. The ashes of the cow had this particular purpose. As often as necessary (when the ashes had all been used) a red cow of full age and without blemish, and which had never worn a yoke, was selected. The high-priest took her from the hands of the people, led her before the camp, and later, when they lived in Palestine, out of the city of Jerusalem. There, before the eyes of all, she was slaughtered and burnt. The ashes were gathered and carefully preserved. These ashes, mingled in water (as with us the salt is put in holy water), served as a means of purification for those who had defiled themselves in any way. To this class belonged all who had sinned against the law and all who had contaminated themselves by certain actions or by touching certain persons or things declared impure by the law; as, the leprous, women in labor, dead bodies, etc. Such contaminated persons were held as unholy and no longer belonging to the chosen people; they were not allowed to participate in the holy ceremonies, and were excluded from going into the temple and from public converse with the people. If any one needed purification, he was sprinkled with the water in which some of the ashes of the cow had been mingled.—*Num. 19: 2-9*. By this means he was freed from

the defilement contracted and from the punishments threatened by the law, and was sanctified, in the sense that he was reinstated into his former rights. The sacrifices of the Jews had by no means the virtue of purifying man from sin, of justifying him before God and of sanctifying him; their whole effect consisted in this, that those who had defiled themselves, were declared clean exteriorly, in the eyes of men.

But it is quite different with the sacrifice which Jesus Christ offered for us. *This*, the Apostle says, *is an unspotted sacrifice, which cleanses our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God.* By *dead works* we are to understand sins; they are called dead works, because they deprive man of the supernatural life, which is sanctifying grace, and make him guilty of eternal death, which is damnation. The unspotted sacrifice which Jesus offered for us on the cross in a bloody manner, and which he daily renews in the holy Mass, and will renew till the end of the world in an unbloody manner, frees us from these dead works. All sins, original as well as actual, are expiated by the sacrifice of Christ. Therefore St. Paul elsewhere says: "In him (Jesus Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace."—*Ephes. 1: 7.* And St. John says: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."—*1. John 1: 7.*

How much better off are we than the Jews in the Old Law! All their sacrifices were without interior effect, they had not even the virtue of cleansing man from a venial sin, much less from a mortal sin. Our sacrifice has, in truth, a purifying and sanctifying power, for Jesus Christ has made by his sacrifice a perfect—nay, a superabundant satisfaction to God for our sins, and if we but receive the Sacraments worthily, we shall be cleansed from all our sins, even the greatest and most grievous, be sanctified, and become heirs of heaven. Oh! how much does the sacrifice of Christ transcend all the sacrifices of the Jews!

The sacrifice of Christ enables us to serve the *living God*. As long as man is not cleansed from sin he can not serve God, that is, he can do nothing that would have a supernatural value and be meritorious for heaven. The good works which he performs may bring him temporal blessings, and effect, perhaps, that God gives him more graces for salvation, but for eternity they are and remain without merit. But if he is justified and sanctified, a living member on the body of Christ, he can serve God, and everything he does with a good intention, even the most insignificant thing, as a drink of water which he gives to a thirsty person, has a supernatural value, and is rewarded in heaven. Thus, again, we owe it to the sacrifice which our divine Saviour offered for us, that we can serve God, as we must serve him and in this service acquire the eternal goods of heaven.

## PERORATION.

At the conclusion of the lesson for this day the Apostle says that Jesus Christ, because he offered not, as the Jewish high-priest did, the blood of animals, but himself, became the Mediator of the new covenant between God and man, that through his death all that are called, Jews and Gentiles, may receive the eternal inheritance. Since Jesus Christ offered himself on the cross for all men, and merited for all the forgiveness of sins and the graces necessary for salvation, all can be saved. Let us do what is required on our part, in order to appropriate to ourselves the fruits of Redemption. Stand firm in faith, walk in the way of the commandments of God and avail yourselves of the means of grace and salvation, and you shall obtain your eternal destiny. Amen.



## PASSION SUNDAY.

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**GOSPEL.** *John 8: 46-59.* At that time Jesus said to the multitudes of the Jews: which of you shall convince me of sin? If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe me? He that is of God, heareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not because you are not of God. The Jews therefore answered, and said to him: Do not we say well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? Jesus answered: I have not a devil but I honor my Father, and you have dishonored me. But I seek not my own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Amen, amen, I say to you: If any man keep my word, he shall not see death forever. The Jews therefore said: Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest: If any man keep my word, he shall not taste death forever. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? and the prophets are dead. Whom dost thou make thyself? Jesus answered: If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father that glorifieth me, of whom you say that he is your God. And you have not known him, but I know him. And if I shall say that I know him not, I shall be like to you, a liar. But I do know him, and do keep his word. Abraham your father rejoiced that he might see my day: he saw it, and was glad. The Jews therefore said to him: Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said to them: Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am. They took up stones therefore to cast at him. But Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.

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## 2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

### EXPLANATION OF THE GOSPEL, AND LESSONS FROM IT.

What the gospel for this day relates to us, occurred at Jerusalem, on the feast of the tabernacles. The hatred and envy of the Scribes and Pharisees against Christ had reached its culmination. They had sent their servants to arrest him whilst he was preaching. But these were so captivated by his words that they departed without having effected their purpose, and full of enthusiasm, said: 'Never did man speak like this man.'—*John 7: 46.* The next day the Scribes and Pharisees brought before him an adulteress, and proposed to him the question whether, according to the law of Moses, she should be stoned or not. They thought that Jesus, owing to his natural mildness and leniency, would acquit her, in this case they would have had reason for condemning him as a violator of the law. But Christ confounded their cunning with the words: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."—*John 8: 7.* When, after these occurrences, Christ continued to teach in the temple, they interrupted him by various malicious questions and blasphemies, which the gospel of this day records. Let us then hear—

- I. How this gospel is to be understood;*  
*II. What we ought to learn from it*

## PART I.

When Christ severely reproached the Scribes and Pharisees for their unbelief, they began to quarrel with him, to insult him, and to blaspheme in a most horrible manner.

1. "*Which of you shall convince me of sin? If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe me?*" The drift of these words is: He who lives a perfectly holy life deserves belief, for such a one does not lie. Now, if my life is so holy that even my greatest enemies can not rise against me and convince me of sin, I certainly speak the truth and deserve credit in all I teach. Our Saviour also assigns the reason why the Jews do not believe in him, saying: "He that is of God, heareth the words of God; therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God." The Jews, and particularly the Scribes and Pharisees, did not refuse to believe in our Lord because they could convince him of a sin or a delusion, but only because they were of a corrupt heart—men who were not guided and governed by the spirit of God, but by the devil. They were not children of God, but children of the devil; therefore they would neither hear the word of God, which Jesus preached to them, nor believe in it.

2. The severe reproach which Christ administered to the Jews on account of their unbelief, made them very angry and not being able to refute him with arguments, they broke out into horrid insults and blasphemies: "*Do we not say well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?*" The Samaritans, originally Gentiles, took possession of the lands which the Israelites who were led into the Assyrian captivity had occupied. In the course of time they accepted a part of the law of the Jews, but retained a great deal of Gentilism and were half Jew and half Gentile. The Jews entertained a violent hatred against them, and to call one a Samaritan was as much as to call him a heretic or an arch-enemy of the Jews. But the Jews were not content with this insult. They went still further, and called him a man that has a devil. A more horrid blasphemy could scarcely be imagined.

3. Christ answered: "*I have not a devil; but I honor my Father, and you have dishonored me. But I seek not my own glory; there is one that seeketh and judgeth.*"

Behold how right Peter was in applying to Christ the words of the Prophet: "Who, when he was reviled did not revile, when he suffered, he threatened not."—*I Pet. 2: 23.* To the first blasphemy, that he was

a Samaritan, he made no reply, because it was directed only to his person, and its falsehood was evident to every one, from the fact that he fulfilled the law most punctually. The second blasphemy, that he had a devil, he refuted, because it touched the honor of God; but he did it without any bitterness; he proved to his blasphemers the absurdity of their blasphemy, since he was doing the very contrary of what the devil does, that he honored God, whilst the devil does not honor him, but endeavors to keep man by all means from the worship of God. At the same time he indicated to them that God, his heavenly Father, does not suffer himself to be dishonored with impunity, and that they may now expect the severest chastisements for their blasphemies.

4. In order, if possible, to bring them back to a better sense, disregarding their blasphemies, he continues to instruct and to make them the most glorious promise, if they would receive his word with a believing heart, and live accordingly: "*Amen, amen, I say to you: If any man keep my word, he shall not see death forever.*" There is a threefold death: the *natural*, which consists in the separation of the soul from the body; the *moral*, which we incur by every mortal sin, because it robs the soul of supernatural life, or sanctifying grace; the *eternal*, which is eternal damnation. The word of God protects us against this threefold death if we embrace it and make it the rule of our life. It preserves us from the *natural death*, not in the sense that we should never die, but so that it divests death of all its horrors, and changes it, as it were, into a gentle sleep, making it appear as a transit into a better life, and uniting it with the blessed hope of a glorious resurrection. It preserves from the *moral death*, for if we observe it conscientiously, we commit no sin, but persevere in the state of grace; and, finally, it preserves from *everlasting death*, for if we die in the state of grace, we have nothing to fear, our way leads directly to heaven.

5. The Jews did not understand the words of Christ; they thought he promised that if they should receive his word believingly and observe it, they would live forever upon earth and never die. This they considered an unheard-of pride, nay, madness. Therefore they said: "*Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest: If any man keep my word, he shall not taste death forever. Art thou greater than our Father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Whom dost thou make thyself?*" They meant to say, these venerable and holy men, with all their holiness, could not escape death, and you will make all immortal that adhere to you. Are you not out of your senses? Has the devil robbed you of all understanding, that you assert such nonsense?

6. Our Lord shows them that he does not exalt himself nor lay claim to an honor which is not due him; that, on the contrary, God his Father, whom they know not, honors him, but that he knows him, and would be a liar like them if he should say that he does not know him. In these words Christ declares that, as Son of God, he possesses the most perfect knowledge of God, his Father,—a knowledge such as no created being, whether man or angel, has, and that it is he through whom men come to the knowledge of God, as he says elsewhere: "No one knoweth who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him."—*Luke 10: 22*. The additional remark of Christ, that he keeps the Father's word, expresses that he does everything, that his Father wills, and that this is the best proof that he knows him. For the more one knows God, the more he feels himself impelled to serve him; and the more one serves God, the more he will grow in the knowledge of God.

7. The Jews having reproached Christ for depreciating their progenitor, Abraham, he rejects the reproach by praising Abraham, but in such a way as to give testimony to the truth and to set himself above Abraham: "*Abraham, your father, rejoiced that he might see my day; he saw it, and was glad.*" When Abraham was sojourning yet on earth, he rejoiced that according to the repeated promise of God (*Gen. 18: 18, 22: 18*), I would come as the Redeemer into the world. In limbo, where he is with the rest of the just, he heard the day of my Incarnation and birth, and rejoiced. Christ gives the Jews to understand that he is truly the Messiah whom God promised to Abraham, and whom he had awaited with a great desire.

8. The Jews, in their blindness, misconstrued these words also, and believed that he meant to say, that Abraham saw him in this life two thousand years before the time in which he was speaking, and rejoiced at his appearance; therefore, full of indignation, they said: "*Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?*" Jesus said to them: "*Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.*" With these words Christ attests that he is God from all eternity. Although Abraham lived two thousand years before my Incarnation and coming into the world, I, nevertheless, have been before him, for I am the Son of God, I am truly God, and as God, I have an eternal existence. This time the Jews understood what Christ said, but because they disbelieved in him, they flew into a rage, and took up stones in order to stone him to death, as a blasphemer, for blasphemy was to be punished by stoning.—*Lev. 24: 15, 16*. But the hour when Christ should die had not yet come; the Jews, therefore, could not accomplish their wicked design; he hid himself by making himself invisible, went out

of the temple, and visited it no more during the short time that he stayed in Jerusalem.

This is a short explanation of the gospel for this day; let us now see what we have to learn from it.

## PART II.

1. "*Who can convince me of sin?*" Thus Christ spoke; first, to show that he is more than man, that he is the Son of God and the promised Messiah; and secondly, as a lesson for us, that he who teaches and corrects others, must be irreproachable himself, otherwise he is told: "Physician, cure thyself." Let us not be content with outward justice and probity, for this avails nothing, if we are not interiorly just. We are not justified before God unless our morals are in harmony with our faith.

2. "*He that is of God heareth the words of God.*" Behold here the mark of the children of God and of the children of the devil. He that hears and willingly receives the word which God announces to him by interior inspirations, by spiritual books, by pastors of souls and superiors, has the mark of a child of God; but he that disdains the word of God, as the Israelites did the manna in the desert, who does not love to hear it, of him we must say that he has the mark of a child of the devil. Examine yourselves and see what profit you have derived from the hearing or reading of the word of God heretofore, and consider that, not the hearers, but the doers, of the divine word shall be justified.

3. The Jews insulted and blasphemed Christ most horribly, called him a *Samaritan* and a *man who has a devil*. How does he conduct himself towards his blasphemers? Does he fly into a passion? Does he take revenge on them? No, he defends himself with the utmost calmness, saying merely: "I have no devil." When we are insulted and reviled, how do we behave? Do we not fly into a passion? Do we not become angry? Do we not retaliate and break out into insults? And who is Christ, and who are we? Oh! let us lay aside our sensitiveness; otherwise we can not be disciples of the meek Jesus. A look at him, insulted and blasphemed as he was, should stimulate our heart to meekness. "Oh! man, what ignominy can be inflicted upon you, that Christ has not first endured?"—*St. Augustine*

4. Our Lord complains of the Jews, that they *dishonor* him by their blasphemies. Many Christians, too, make themselves guilty of this grievous sin, by cursing, swearing, and imprecations, which is done so often, and which with many has become a habit. This cursing and

blasphemy is a mortal sin, and frequently connected with scandal, especially when it is done before children. He that is subject to this bad habit, must labor to give it up, and as often as a curse or a blasphemy escapes his lips, he should, for a penance, say: "Praised and blessed be the most holy Sacrament of the Altar." Beware, also, lest you dishonor Christ by unbecoming conduct in the church, and especially by an unworthy communion.

5. Christ assures us *that he does not seek his own glory*, but the glory of his heavenly Father. How differently-minded are we! We seek our own honor so much, that we scarcely do anything in which we have not, more or less, our own honor in view. Oh, what shame, confusion, and grief for us when the divine Judge shall one day uncover our ambition, take from us the assumed honor, and restore it to God, to whom alone it is due. Oh, let us act always according to the maxim of St. Ignatius: "All for the greater honor of God." Let us not forget that it is our first and only vocation on earth to glorify God in all we do, and that our good works have value and merit before God only when they are done for his greater glory.

6. Instead of falling down before Jesus and adoring him, they took up stones in order to kill him. What was the cause of this horrible deed? Nothing else but pride. It was *pride* that blinded them, that the clearest arguments that Jesus gave of his Godhead and of his dignity as Messiah did not open their eyes; it was *pride* that hardened them that they resisted all graces of heaven; it was *pride* that made them the irreconcilable enemies of the Lord and armed their hands with stones. Oh! let us beware of pride and ambition, lest we fall into blindness and obstinacy, and finally into everlasting perdition.

What did Christ do when they would stone him? *He hid himself and went out of the temple.* He was not compelled to do this; for what can human impotence do against divine omnipotence? But he did it to teach us, first, that God departs with his grace from those who disregard his salutary inspirations; and, secondly, that we must go out of the way of angry persons, in order not to inflame their rage, and to avoid still greater mischief.

#### PERORATION.

These are lessons which the gospel for this day contains; remember them, and regulate your life according to them. We live in an age in which Jesus and his holy Church are greatly reviled, insulted, blasphemed, and persecuted; let us take care that we do not suffer any damage in our soul. Let us be steadfast in faith and in our adherence to mother Church, and lead a life worthy of our faith. Let Jesus be

our model and type; let us follow him on the way of the cross, that we may be worthy to follow him into the glory of heaven. Amen.

## PASSION SUNDAY.

# 3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

## CONFESSION.

*"Which of you shall convince me of sin?"—John 8: 46.*

Christ could justly challenge the Jews in these words: "Which of you shall convince me of sin?" He that had come to take away the sins of the world, was to be himself without sin, and no shadow of an imperfection should obscure the splendor of his glory. Hence the Apostle says: "It was fitting that we should have such a high-priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."—*Heb. 7: 27.*

How different is it with us! Although others may have nothing to condemn in us, we must confess to ourselves, that from our infancy up to this moment, we have sinned often and grievously in thought, word, and deed, and by the omission of many good works. Therefore St. John writes: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." At the same time the Apostle indicates a means which we must make use of to obtain the forgiveness of our sins: "If we confess our sins, he (God) is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity."—*I. John 1: 8, 9.* Confession, therefore, or the acknowledgment of our sins, is the means for the forgiveness of our sins, and on confession, the fourth part necessary to the Sacrament of Penance, I shall speak to-day by answering the three following questions:

- I. Why must we confess?*
- II. What must we confess?*
- III. How must we confess?*

## PART I

That we should confess, that is, accuse ourselves of our sins before a priest in order to obtain from him absolution, is not a *human*, but a *divine ordinance*, as the Council of Trent emphatically teaches in these words: "If any one denies that sacramental confession was in-

stituted by virtue of divine right, or is necessary to salvation, let him be anathema."—*Sess. 14. Cap. 6.* The divine institution of confession is evident—

1. *From the words of Christ:* "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."—*John 20: 23.* With these words Christ constituted the Apostles and their successors in the priesthood spiritual judges; they were either to forgive sinners their sins, or retain them. If a judge is to pass a sentence upon some one, he must know the circumstances of the case in detail; for without this knowledge he can neither condemn nor acquit. In like manner the confessor must know the state of the soul of the sinner, if he is to judge it. But because the sins, especially the sins of thought and desire, are something entirely hidden, the confessor can not arrive at the knowledge of them unless the sinner reveals them, or, in other words, confesses them, in detail. Moreover, the confessor must enjoin a penance on the sinner as a satisfaction. This penance must, as much as possible, be in due proportion to his sins, and must assist the sinner in his amendment. How would the confessor be able to enjoin on the sinner a penance corresponding to his sins if he had no knowledge of them? The power, therefore, of forgiving and retaining sin, which Christ gave to the Apostles and their lawful successors, evidently includes for the sinner the duty of confessing his sins.

2. *From the testimony of all the Fathers of the Church.* St. Cyprian, a bishop and martyr of the third century, severely reproaches those who in the persecution had sacrificed to idols, for going to the table of the Lord, without having first confessed their crime, so as to be reconciled with God, and for thus sinning more grievously against the Lord than when they denied him. Then he exhorts all those who in any way, in thought or deed, have sinned, to confess without delay. St. Ambrose of Milan says: "The poison is sin; the remedy, the accusation of one's crime; the poison is iniquity, confession is the remedy against relapse. And, therefore, it is truly a remedy against poison if thou declarest thine iniquities, that thou mayst be justified. Art thou ashamed? This shame will avail thee little at the judgment-seat of God." St. Augustine writes: "Let no one say to himself, I do penance to God in private, I do it before God. Is it, then, in vain that Christ hath said: 'Whatsoever you shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven?' Is it in vain that the keys have been given to the Church? Do we make void the gospel? void the words of Christ?" St. Chrysostom says: "Lo! we have now at length reached the close of holy Lent; now especially we must press forward in the career of fasting . . . and make a full and accurate confession of our sins . . . that with these



good works, having come to the day of Easter, we may enjoy the beauty of the Lord . . . For, as the enemy knows that having confessed our sins, and shown our wounds to the physician, we attain to a perfect cure, he in an especial manner opposes us." St. Basil: "We must confess our sins to those to whom has been committed the dispensation of the mysteries of God." In general the Fathers of the Church teach that the sinner who, out of fear or shame, omits to confess his sins, can no more be absolved from them than a sick man can expect to be cured if he is ashamed to open his case to the physician.

3. *From the doctrine of the Greek schismatical Church.* This Church, which, under the leadership of Photius, separated from the Catholic Church and has remained since then a distinct communion, having no spiritual relation with us, teaches that private confession is an essential part of the Sacrament of Penance, and that without it there is no forgiveness of sins. The Greek schismatic Synod, held at Jerusalem in the year 1672, declares that "the Sacrament of Penance, *which includes private confession*, has been instituted by Christ when he said: 'Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven,' " etc.

4. *Lastly, from the fact that the custom of confessing one's sins has existed in the Church from the beginning.* It is impossible to mention a time in which the custom of confessing one's sins did not exist in the Church, or in which it was introduced by an ordinance of the Church. We read in the Acts, that "many of them who believed came, confessing and declaring their deeds to the Apostles." Why did they confess their sins unless they were bound to do so? And they did not declare their good deeds, but their evil deeds, as is evident from the fruit of their confession in burning the wicked books. St. Irenæus, a disciple of the Apostles, says that some women who had been seduced by a false teacher named Mark, confessed, not only their unchaste actions, but also their impure desires. The Fathers of the Church already quoted prove the existence of confession in the following centuries. We possess several penitential works, or books of confession, which reach far back, in which is described most minutely how the confessors are careful to inquire about the number, kind, greatness, and circumstances of sins, and how the penitents are to accuse themselves of all, even the most secret, sins. Confession is as old as the Church, and is not a human, but a divine institution.

## PART II.

We must confess—

1. *All mortal sins*, howsoever they may have been committed, in thought, word, or deed, or by omission. The Council of Trent teaches

this, in these words: "Whereas all mortal sins, even those of thought, render men *children of wrath* and enemies of God, it is necessary to seek also for the pardon of them all from God, with an open and modest confession; . . . they who act otherwise, and knowingly keep back certain sins, set nothing before the divine bounty to be forgiven through the priest."—*Sess. 14, Cap. 5.*

By mortal sins, which necessarily must be confessed, those are to be understood, *which we remember after a careful examination.* This, again, is the doctrine of the Council of Trent. He, therefore, who carefully examines his conscience, and does not know one or the other mortal sin, or forgets to confess it, his confession is valid; he has, however, the duty to confess the then not known or forgotten sin, in the next confession, after he has come to the knowledge of it.

Concerning venial sins, they may be kept back in confession without guilt, but it is useful and salutary to confess them, partly in order to obtain the remission of them, and partly to afford the confessor a better knowledge of the state of our soul. If we were in doubt whether the sin be mortal or venial, for the sake of greater security, it must be confessed, unless the confessor judges the contrary better, on account of the scrupulosity of the penitent, who sees mortal sin everywhere, where there is none.

2. *The number of mortal sins, i. e.,* we must say how often we have committed each of them. This is evident from the fact that no mortal sin must be kept back. If, notwithstanding a diligent examination of conscience, we can not exactly remember the number of sins, it suffices to give it as nearly as we can. In regard to impure and other seductive words we must give the number of persons in whose presence they have been spoken, because this circumstance multiplies the sin.

### 3. *The necessary circumstances of sin.*

(a) Those circumstances which change the species of the sin, that is, which cause one sin to become quite another, and therefore to be called by another name. Examples: Theft and sacrilege, fornication and adultery, incest and bestiality. "Those circumstances which change the species of the sin, are necessarily to be explained in confession, because, without them, the sins themselves are neither entirely set forth by the penitents, nor are they known clearly to the judges, and it can not be that they can estimate rightly the grievousness of the crimes, and impose on the penitents the punishment which ought to be inflicted on account of them."—*Council of Trent, Sess. 4, Cap. 5.*

(b.) *Those circumstances which make a venial sin mortal.* This is self-evident. We must confess all mortal sins, and since in a particu-

lar instance, a venial sin, on account of some circumstance connected with it, has become a mortal sin, it must be confessed.

(c.) Those circumstances *which do not change the nature of the sin, but considerably aggravate it.* The Council of Trent does not command us to mention these circumstances in confession, but it is highly commendable to do so. The first reason is because many penitents do not know exactly what circumstances aggravate the sin or change the nature of it. Now, if a circumstance were such as would change the nature of sin, and we would not mention it, we would expose ourselves to the danger of making an invalid confession. The second reason is because the confessor is enabled better to judge the state of the soul of the penitent and to prescribe to him more suitable means for the preservation from a relapse.

It is to be remembered, that in mentioning the circumstances, we must mention no person's name, say nothing superfluous and express ourselves as decently as possible.

### PART III.

We must confess—

1. *Sincerely*, that is, we must accuse ourselves just as we sincerely believe ourselves to be guilty before God, without concealing or disguising anything, or excusing it by vain *pretexts*. The priest in the confessional is the representative of God; any insincerity and disguise resorted to in the confessional, is really addressed, not to the priest, but to God himself, who detests nothing so much as a falsehood and a lie. A penitent who, for any reason whatever, conceals a mortal sin in confession, or so extenuates it that it appears only as a venial sin, or does not mention a circumstance which changes the species of the sin, or diminishes the number of mortal sins, makes an invalid and sacrilegious confession. In order to conceal nothing that must necessarily be confessed, consider,—

(a.) *That sincerity in confession is absolutely necessary in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins.* Pray as much as you please, practice all the austerities of penance, give your whole substance to the poor, live like a saint, all is in vain; as long as you conceal one mortal sin in confession, all your confessions and communions are sacrilegious, and if you die in that state you will surely be lost for ever.

2. *That it is better to confess your sins to a priest, who is bound to eternal secrecy and silence, than to live restlessly in sin, to die unhappily, and to be put to shame before the whole world on the last day.* St. Boni-

face, the Apostle of Germany, says in a sermon: "If we conceal our sins, God will reveal them. It is much better to confess our sins to one man, than in that terrible judgment to be accused and abashed before heaven, earth, and hell, not for our amendment, but for our eternal punishment.

3. *Clearly.* We must so express ourselves that the confessor can well understand everything, and clearly see the state of our conscience.

(a.) We must speak neither too low nor too quick, but so speak that the confessor can understand every word. If we should purposely speak so low or quick that the confessor might not understand or hear certain sins, it would be an insincerity, and we should expose ourselves to the danger of making a sacrilegious confession.

(b.) We must confess every sin distinctly, and add whatever is necessary for a knowledge of the species. The accusations: I have had bad thoughts, I have spoken ill, I have not loved God, I have sinned against the third, against the sixth commandment, are too general and indistinct, because the priest could not judge what kind of sins of thoughts, words, and deeds they may have been. We must distinctly name and specify the different sins.

#### PERORATION.

In conclusion, I will yet tell you how you must deport yourselves in the confessional. Kneel down humbly, make the sign of the cross, and say the *Confiteor* as far as "through my most grievous fault." Say when you were last at confession, unless the priest knows it already, then confess your sins. If in the last confession you were not absolved, or if you concealed a sin, or if you have a sacrilegious confession to repeat, tell the confessor this at the very beginning, that he may know how he should act. In conclusion, make a short act of contrition, and ask for a penance and the priest's absolution. Then listen with attention to what the priest tells you, and if he asks you any questions, answer modestly and sincerely. Submit willingly and humbly to his judgment and follow his directions, that you may make a good confession and obtain from God the forgiveness of your sins. Amen.

## PASSION SUNDAY.

## 4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

## THE CELEBRATION OF PASSION SUNDAY.

*"Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple."—John 8: 59.*

This Sunday has a proper name, *Passion Sunday*. It is so called because the Church from now till Easter Sunday occupies herself in a special manner in meditation and in veneration of the Passion of Christ. If you cast a look at the altar, you see that the crucifix, with its figure of our dead Lord, is veiled with a violet cloth. What is the meaning of this? The Church represents figuratively what the gospel of to-day relates of our divine Saviour. The Jews, in their rage, pressed forward with stones in their hands to stone him to death. *"But he hid himself, and went out of the temple."* The Church calls to our mind this event; for that reason she withdraws the picture of Christ crucified from our eyes by veiling it. The cloth is violet, the color of penance, which signifies that Christ has put on the garment of penance in order to atone for our sins and to reconcile us with God, and that we also must do penance, that we may participate in the grace of Redemption. This veiling of the picture of the Crucified also intimates the profound sorrow which the Church feels over the bitter Passion of Jesus, her Bridegroom.

Let us, then, to-day make the bitter Passion of our Lord the subject matter of our pious meditation, and for this end let us consider more closely the celebration of Passion Sunday, for in it the Church shows—

- I. The greatness of the Passion of Jesus;*
- II. The fruits of the Passion of Jesus.*

## PART I.

From the Garden of Olives, where he began his Passion, to Mount Calvary, where he ended it on the cross, Christ endured unutterable tortures and pains in body and soul. It is these, his *interior and exterior* sufferings, that the Church sets before our eyes to-day in the celebration of Passion Sunday.

1. The priest recites at every holy Mass, except in the masses for the dead, the psalm "*Judica*." This psalm is omitted from this Sun-

day till Easter, if the Mass is of the day itself. The question then arises: Why is this psalm omitted? It is because the whole celebration of the Passion-tide is nothing else than the realization of what the psalm *Judica* contains, wherefore also to-day it forms the Introit of the Mass. The Passion-tide mainly represents to us the bitter Passion and death of Christ, and especially the sufferings and persecutions which he endured from his enemies; and because the psalm *Judica* has for its contents the sufferings and treats of trials of King David, a type of Christ, the Church omits this psalm and immediately turns our attention to our divine Saviour, admonishing us to consider the ignominy and death which he voluntarily took on himself in his Passion. Let us briefly consider this interior Passion of Jesus.

In the Garden of Olives he said to his three disciples, Peter, James, and John: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death."—*Mark* 13: 34. Shortly afterwards, whilst he prayed to his heavenly Father, a bloody sweat broke forth from the pores of his sacred body. "And his sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground."—*Luke* 22: 44. What anguish, what oppression of the heart must it not have been, which drew such sighs, and such a sweat from Christ! This was, however, only the beginning of the interior suffering which never abandoned him till he died on the cross. What sadness must not the treason of Judas and his unhappy end, the flight of all his disciples, and the threefold denial of Peter, have caused him! What must his most sacred heart have felt when the robber and murderer Barabbas was preferred before him, and when he was derided and mocked on the cross! And who can comprehend the sorrow when he saw himself deprived of all divine consolation and cried out: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—*Matt.* 27: 46

The suffering of his soul, which certainly was as great, even greater than his corporal Passion, you should make the subject of your pious meditation in this holy time, and you should unite with it salutary exercises, such as contrition for your sins, especially the sins of the heart, and patience and resignation to the will of God in the various tribulations of life. Beg of him, for the sake of his bitter anguish and abandonment, to assist you in your last struggle, to comfort and strengthen you, that you may persevere in faith, hope, and charity, and make a holy and happy end.

2. The Church represents in the celebration of Passion Sunday, not only the interior, but also the exterior, sufferings of Christ. In the holy Mass and in the divine office the doxology: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," recurs very frequently. From this day till Easter it is omitted in the Masses of the day; in the breviary it is also frequently, and in the last three days entirely, omitted.

Why so? On account of the abuse and contumely which Christ endured from Jews and Gentiles in his Passion and death. He had scarcely delivered himself into the hands of his enemies, when he was treated worse than the greatest malefactor. He was bound with ropes, buffeted, spit upon; and in the night of Holy Thursday, and Good Friday, he had not a moment's rest! But this ignominy and suffering was only a prelude to what was to follow. What did he not suffer at the horrible scourging, where he was so bruised and wounded that the prophet says of him: "We have thought him, as it were, a leper, as one struck by God and afflicted."—*Is.* 53: 4. What did he not suffer at the crowning with thorns, and on his way to Calvary, when, his strength failing, in his agony he fell under the heavy weight of the cross! What did he not suffer at his crucifixion, when his hands and feet were pierced through with nails under the heavy strokes of the hammer, and during the three hours that he hung on the cross, till he bowed down his adorable head and died!

These are the inexpressible sufferings which the Church calls to our mind in this Passion-tide. She sees her divine Founder and Bridegroom as the Man of Sorrows, humbled to the dust; therefore she chants no Gloria; sitting at the foot of the cross, she can only mourn and weep. When St. Theresa one day beheld a crucifix covered with blood and wounds, she felt so great a sorrow for her sins that she thought she should die. She threw herself on her knees, and, with many tears, begged of Jesus never to permit her again to commit a sin. And this, as she herself says, was followed by the greatest success, for from that hour she received greater graces, which enabled her to combat and overcome all bad inclinations. Let us also during this time frequently meditate on the bitter Passion and death of Christ; it will be an effectual means for us to love Jesus and to offend him no more.

## PART II.

In the celebration of this Sunday the Church shows us also the fruits of the Passion.

1. In the epistle of the Mass (*Heb.* 9: 11-16) Christ appears as High-priest, who, in his person and sacrifice, infinitely transcends the high-priests and sacrifices of the Old Law. The high-priests of the Old Law were only men, being themselves unclean and sinful; Christ, our High-priest, is God and man, pure, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners. The sacrifices of the priests in the Old Law consisted of created things, mostly animals; they had no virtue to purify man interiorly and blot out his sins; but the sacrifice of Christ, which is himself, cleanses us from all stains of sin; it justifies and sanctifies us.

2. In the preface of the Mass we also behold the fruits of the Passion. It says: "It is truly meet and just, right and available to salvation, that we should always, and in all places, give thanks to thee, eternal God, who has fastened the salvation of the human race on the wood of the cross, that from whence death originated, new life should arise, that the evil spirit, who conquered in the wood, should be conquered on the wood, through Jesus Christ, our Lord." It was a tree that caused us all both corporeal and spiritual death—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in Paradise. Again it is a tree that brings us new life and grace—and this is the tree of Golgotha, the Holy Cross. Adam by his disobedience plunged us into the greatest misery; Christ, the second and better Adam, by his obedience, has raised, not only himself, but us all, and restored us to the happy state of children of God and heirs of the kingdom of heaven; hence the Apostle says: "For as by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners; so also by the obedience of one, many shall be made just."—*Rom. 5: 19*. By means of the tree in Paradise the evil spirit seduced our first parents and made them and us his slaves; by means of the tree on Calvary Christ destroyed the power of the devil over mankind and set us free.

3. The Church also indicates the fruits of the Passion of Christ, by omitting in the breviary what is called the commemorations of the Saints, that is, those prayers by which they are venerated and their intercession is invoked. She does not do this as if she believed it was not good and wholesome now to venerate the Saints and to invoke them, but her intention is to direct our attention exclusively to Christ, our only mediator and Saviour. But for Jesus Christ we would not be redeemed, there would be no Saints, whom we could venerate; the holiness and felicity of the elect and the power of their intercession are the fruit of the Passion, and it is to his merits that the Saints owe all they have and are. The stars disappear when the sun rises. Thus we do not commemorate the Saints, because we have Christ, the Sun of Justice, the Author of sanctity, before our eyes.

#### PERORATION.

If heretofore you have been cold and indifferent towards your Saviour, begin at least now to love him with all your heart; for this end meditate on his Passion; for nothing is able to warm your cold heart more than this wonderful mystery of love; perform the Stations of the Cross, and imprint deeply on your mind what Christ suffered and what graces he merited for you by his Passion and death on the cross. Indeed, the meditation on his Passion will produce in you the most salutary effects; it will make you hate and detest sin as the only cause



of his Passion and death, and induce you to lead a life of penance. The boundless love of Jesus will inflame your heart with the love of him, and thus, with God's grace, you will work out your salvation and be saved. Amen.

## PASSION SUNDAY.

# 5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

TWO STONES WHICH IN OUR TIME ARE CAST AT THE CHURCH.

*"They took up stones to cast at him."—John 8: 59.*

Jesus, in the gospel of this day, *declares* himself to the Jews, the promised Messiah whom Abraham, their progenitor, had ardently expected, and whose Incarnation he had greeted in Limbo with the other just; and affirms that he is older than Abraham, that is, he is the Son of God, from eternity. But instead of falling down and adoring him, they take up stones to cast at him. Thus the Jews treated Christ, who, in his infinite love and mercy, had come to redeem and save them.

This ungrateful feeling of the blind and obstinate Jewish race is not yet extinct; it is still living, and not only among the Jews, but also among some Christians. They can no longer cast stones at Christ, because he is withdrawn from their eyes and sits at the right hand of God, but they cast stones at the Church established by him, in order to destroy her. Two stones especially are cast at the Church in our days, and they are these charges:

- 1. The Catholic Church is dangerous to the State;*
- 2. She is the enemy of progress.*

## PART I.

*The Church is dangerous to the State.* You can read this in newspapers, pamphlets and books, and hear it in public conventions and legislative halls. Is it just to cast this stone at the Church? Let us examine the case a little more closely.

1. If the Church were dangerous to the state, she should, before all, be hostile to the rulers.

There are various forms of government. In most states one person is at the head of the government and governs by the right of succes-

sion, as emperor, king, archduke, etc. The power of the ruler is either limited or absolute. Some countries are republics, where one person does not exercise the power of government according to the right of succession, but a president is elected by the people for a distinct term of years. How does the Church regard these forms of government? She places no impediment in the way of any, much less does she assume to designate the one or the other as not lawful, or to teach that her children need not submit. Example: France, which for the last fifty years had so many forms of government, and the Church has always recognized them.

The Church does not even consider whether the rulers are believers or unbelievers, orthodox or heterodox, good and pious, or the contrary; she teaches that her children owe obedience to every legitimate ruler, no matter what he is in a religious or moral point of view. Example: The first Christians, who never rebelled against the pagan authorities, as the Jews did against the Romans. And why does the Church submit to every existing government? Only and solely on account of God, for she is taught by divine revelation that every lawful authority is ordained by God, and that every rebellion against it is a rebellion against God. 'Let every soul be subject to higher powers, for there is no power but from God, and those that are, are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation.'—*Rom. 13: 1, 2.*

2. *But perhaps the Church infringes upon the rights of the rulers and does not regard their ordinances and laws?* Neither does she do this. The rulers have, for instance, the right to enter into alliances with other nations, to make treaties, to declare war, to make peace; they have the power to establish institutions of the arts and sciences, and whatever is necessary for the common good, and to assess taxes. Does the Church hinder the government in doing these things? No. On the contrary, she obliges all her children to obedience, she coöperates with the temporal authority, and supports and sustains her ordinances to the best of her power. She teaches in particular, that the temporal authority has the power from God to make laws, and that all subjects are bound to obey these laws. She teaches that Christians must submit themselves even to temporal laws, not from human respect, but for God's sake, and that he sins who violates them, for the simple reason that the temporal authority is the representative of God. He that stands by the doctrine of the Catholic Church never allows himself to violate a law of the temporal authority, even if he had no evil consequences to fear, for he says to himself: I keep this law, not on account of men, but on account of God; my Church teaches me that I would sin, and must expect a punishment from God, if I transgress it.

There is only one case in which the Catholic would be bound to refuse obedience to the temporal laws; that is, if by such laws something were commanded or forbidden that would be contrary to the divine law, and consequently a sin. In this case obedience would be morally impossible, because one is never allowed to act contrary to the law of God, and sin. Therefore St. Peter and the other Apostles said to the high Council which forbade them to preach the Gospel: "God is to be obeyed before man."—*Acts* 5: 24-30. But even in this case the Catholic must confine himself to the refusal of obedience, for it is the express doctrine of the Church, that subjects are in no case allowed to use force against the government in power and to rebel against it. They may seek the redress of their grievances in a lawful way, but if in this they do not obtain their end, nothing remains for them but to persevere in patience till it pleases God to come to their aid. The weapons of the Christians, says a Father of the Church, are tears and prayers.

The accusation, therefore, that the Church is dangerous to the State, is a stone which is flung at the Church without reason, the very contrary being the truth. The Church is the best and most powerful support of the State, because she teaches that it has its origin and power from God, and urges all subjects to fulfil their duties towards it conscientiously.

## PART II.

Another stone which in our time is frequently cast at the Church is the assertion that she is an *enemy of progress*. Is this assertion true? I answer, yes, and no, according to the sense in which the word "progress" is taken.

1. There is a *good and true progress* which the Church approves and promotes. We see that in our time natural sciences and arts are progressing wonderfully, inventions are made, and works performed which are a great honor to the human intellect. Just look at our railroads, steamboats, telegraphs, machines in agriculture, factories and trades, at the grand and majestic buildings—they are indeed a progress, of which a hundred years ago nobody, with the wildest flight of imagination, had even an idea.

Is the Church opposed to this progress? Who would dare to assert it? The Church has always approved all useful progress, and she approves it to-day, and not a few priests have taken part in the progress of all times, and continue to take part in it. Was it not the Church that civilized the rude, untutored nations, that instructed them in agriculture, trades, and arts, and taught them to erect commodious houses, and to lead a regularly ordered life in cities, towns, and vil-

lages? Was it not the Church that established schools everywhere, and founded institutions of learning? And is it not the Church that supports the state in the education of the people, and especially of the youth? The Church is in no way the adversary of progress; on the contrary, she sanctions and promotes it as much as she can.

2. But there is also a *false and bad progress*, a progress which seeks to triumph in our day, and which, if it should obtain full sway, would fill the world with mischief and ruin.

(a.) This progress denies the existence of God, says that the world originated from itself, that man is descended from an ape, or it makes him originate from the foam of the sea, as birds from the yolk of an egg; this progress denies that man has an immortal soul, that there is a heaven or a hell; in short, this progress subverts all that the Christians, the Jews, and even the Gentiles, have believed and still believe. According to this progress there is no moral law, no difference between virtue and vice. It is therefore one and the same thing whether I give alms or steal, whether I love or hate, whether I save a man's life or take it away. This progress, especially in large cities, has many adherents, and is acquiring strength in the country. The fruits of this progress are a diabolical hatred of everything Christian, especially the Catholic Church; crimes and vices, than which there could have been none more horrid in the days of Noah; a total neglect of all Christian duties; numberless suicides; and the phenomenon that many have sworn to die without the priest, and without the Sacraments, and to be buried like pagans.

(b.) There is another *progress* which does not go so far. It admits the belief in God, in the immortality of the soul, in rewards and punishments in the next world, but it rejects the entire divine revelation and asserts that we must believe nothing, except what we can comprehend with our reason. But with our reason we can know but little of God and supernatural things, and that little imperfectly. Without divine revelation we know nothing of all the mysteries of our holy religion; of the most holy Trinity, the Incarnation of Christ, and the work of our redemption, of the sacrifice of the Mass, and the Sacraments. Hence it is evident that if one receives reason as the only rule of faith, he must reject all Christianity.

It is evident that the Church cannot sanction such a *progress*, but must resist it by all means in her power, and condemn it, else she would not fulfil the commission of her divine Founder, to teach all nations, to teach them to observe all things which are necessary for salvation. Infidels and free-thinkers may make these charges against her and try to persuade the world that the Catholic Church is the

enemy of all progress and must be rooted out, but the Church will always raise her voice, warn the nations against this pernicious progress, tear the mask from its face and show it in its entire wickedness.

#### PERORATION.

You now know the two stones which are unjustly cast in our days at the Church: *that the Church is dangerous to the State*; but she is not; *that she is the enemy of progress*; and she is not, if a good progress is meant. On the contrary, the Church is a pillar and support of the State, because she declares the ruler to be the representative of God, and enjoins on all subjects as a duty of conscience to submit to the existing government and to keep its laws for the sake of God. She sanctions every progress that is good, and condemns only that which destroys the Christian faith, and renders man miserable for time and eternity. The Church is a good and affectionate mother, who wills only what is best for us. Let us be good, obedient children, let us conscientiously fulfil our duties as subjects of the State and endeavor to make progress, not only in temporal things, but especially in the business of our salvation, according to the words of the apostle: "Increase in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."—*II. Pet. 3: 18.*

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#### PASSION SUNDAY.

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### 6. MORAL SKETCH.

#### GOD ABANDONS THE INCORRIGIBLE SINNER.

*"Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple."—John 8: 59.*

The Jews took stones to cast at Jesus, in order to kill him. But he hid himself, and went out of the temple. The Jews were angry because they could not stone him to death, but afterwards they comforted themselves with the thought: although we could not kill him, we have at least driven him off, and he will certainly come no more into the temple to preach his odious doctrine. Oh, what blindness! What is to them the greatest evil, is desirable; they rejoice that by stoning him they have compelled him to abandon them, whilst they should weep and mourn because he has abandoned them. This is the

punishment of those unhappy ones who despise all graces of heaven and obstinately persevere in sin. God abandons them.

Let us meditate to-day on this serious truth. God abandons the incorrigible sinner, and this is—

- I. *A terrible,*
- II. *A just,*
- III. *A universal punishment.*

#### PART I.

God abandons the incorrigible sinner, and this is a terrible punishment, for such a sinner—

- 1. *Will not be converted, although he might be.* Proof:

(a.) *The Jews.* Christ was with them yet, although he went no more into their temple. He soon came into their city again, performed miracles anew, healing a blind man; he instructed them again, and endeavored to convince them of his Divinity and of his dignity of Messiah. When he was hanging on the cross they still had an opportunity of being converted like the penitent thief, the centurion, and others. Moreover, they had forty years yet for their penance. In this time the Resurrection of Jesus occurred, which was known in all Jerusalem and could not be denied; the descent of the Holy Ghost, which was accompanied by great signs and miracles, the preaching and propagation of the Gospel in the whole Roman Empire, and the countless miracles which the Apostles and their successors performed. Who can think it possible that the Jews would have persevered in their unbelief? And yet they did so; only a comparatively small number of them embraced the Christian faith, the great bulk remained obstinate till the punishments of God overtook them.

(b.) *Careless Christians.* Conversion is much easier for them than it was formerly for the Jews. As members of the Catholic Church they are in the possession of all the means of grace by which they can be purified and sanctified. They have the word of God, the holy sacrifice of the Mass, the holy Sacraments; moreover, God seeks to win them by the voice of their conscience, by the admonitions of friends, by the good example of pious Christians, by prosperity and adversity. I leave it to yourselves to judge whether conversion is not easy for a Christian. But is he converted? No, it is too often the case that he rejects the means of salvation, or abuses them to continue offending God. Among us there are also many incorrigible sinners. No matter what God does for them, they are not converted. Nay, instead of being converted, they—

2 *Become only more obstinate, and therefore more culpable.* We see this again—

(a.) *In the Jews.* The longer Christ remained among them, the more pains he took to convert them; but the more miracles he wrought, the more hostile they became towards him. They misinterpreted his words, contradicted him, calumniated and blasphemed him, and sought his life. They did this, not from ignorance, but from malice; they knew and admitted that he wrought miracles; they said: "What do we, for this man doeth many miracles?"—*John 11: 47.* Finally they decreed his death, delivered him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, and ceased not till he was condemned to die on the cross. What obstinacy! We need not wonder that Christ said: "Woe to thee, Corozain, woe to thee, Bethsaida: for if in Tyre and Sidon the mighty works had been done that have been done in you, they would long ago have done penance in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, in the day of judgment, than for you."—*Matt. 11: 21, 22.*

(b.) *In Christians.* Many of them resemble bricks, which, when they are taken out of the kiln, are not particularly hard yet, but become the harder the longer they are exposed to the sun. First, when they fall into a mortal sin, their conscience is aroused, a sermon, a kind admonition, frequently makes an impression upon them; they are uneasy and desire to get rid of the sin. But the longer they persevere in evil and the oftener they relapse, the more careless they become; till finally they go so far that they hate virtue and find pleasure only in what is evil. If any one rebukes them and tries to put a stop to their sinful career, they become his enemy, insult and calumniate him, and if it were in their power, they would treat him no better than the Jews treated Christ. This is especially true of those who fall away from the Church and worship the so-called liberalism. It is evident that such become daily more culpable and condemnable. The word which Christ said of his betrayer applies to them: "It were better for that man if he had not been born."—*Matt. 26: 24.*

## PART II.

*God abandons the incorrigible sinner; it is a just punishment.* We shall understand this,

1. *When we consider how God might treat the incorrigible sinner, and how he treats him in reality.*

(a.) If a father has a degenerate son, who by his bad conduct causes him nothing but shame and bitterness of life, no one can blame him if

he renounces him as his son and disinherits him. And we accuse God of injustice when he withdraws his hand and abandons those who never cease to offend and outrage him by their sins and vices!

(b.) God might abandon the sinner immediately after the first sin, as he abandoned the rebellious angels in the moment they sinned, and cast them into hell. But, generally speaking, he does not so treat men. They sinned, not only once, but ten, twenty, a hundred, or a thousand times, and oftener; they pile up sins mountain high, and God has patience with them, and waits many years for their conversion. Now if God, after a long series of years, turns away from the sinner, and abandons him, who can call it unjust? Where is the man who would be as indulgent with those who offend him as God is with sinners who frequently offend him grievously every day?

(c.) Moreover, God abandons not even the greatest sinner in such a manner that he withdraws all graces from him. For as God's grace is absolutely necessary for conversion, it would, if God refused him all grace, be impossible for him to be converted and to save his soul; but, whereas God wills all men to be saved, even the greatest sinners, it follows that he also gives them sufficient graces. These sufficient graces avail nothing to men who are hardened in evil; they are not converted, and therefore they perish; but that is their own fault, for no one, and least of all a great sinner, can demand that God should give him extraordinary graces and work miracles in order to save him from perdition.

2. *If we consider the conduct of the sinner towards God's grace.* If you hear of a poor abandoned sick man, you go full of compassion to help him; you give him food, as he is almost starved, but he refuses your food; you send a physician to him, but he also repulses him and his medicine; you offer him your services, but he drives you from his couch. Now I ask: What will you do? You will abandon him without reproaching yourselves that you act uncharitably towards him, for he rejects your help. Now, just so, and a great deal worse, does the incorrigible sinner act towards God, who offers him numberless graces for his salvation, but he rejects them, and not only once, but a hundred times, and oftener. Does God do him any wrong if he punishes him by abandoning him? "We would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed; let us forsake her."—*Jer.* 51: 9.

Let us suppose another case. In your charity you assist a poor man, you give him clothes, to cover his nakedness; you give him money, to buy bread and other necessary articles. But what use does he make of your alms? He sells for a trifle the clothes you gave him, and spends for intoxicating drink the money which you gave him for bread.



Instead of thanking you, he mocks, calumniates, insults you and threatens even to kill you. I ask again, will you continue to support such a wretch? Certainly not. Full of indignation you will withdraw your hand from him and say: He shall never get a cent from me; I would consider it a sin to give him anything, because he abuses my benefits and acts so ungratefully. Now many sinners act so. They abuse the graces which God gives them for their salvation. They hear the word of God merely to laugh at it, or to criticise the speaker. They go to confession and communion—perhaps once a year, at Easter, but without a resolution to change their sinful life, and thereby they commit a double sacrilege. The Sundays and holidays they spend in the service of the devil, in sins and vices of every sort, and thus they live for years. Now judge for yourselves: Does God act unjustly when he forsakes such sinners and delivers them to the perdition which they have deserved a thousand times? Oh, surely if the good and merciful God forsakes the incorrigible sinner, it is nothing else than a just punishment, as every damned soul must confess on the day of judgment: "Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgment is right."—*Ps. 118: 137*

### PART III.

*God abandons the incorrigible sinner, and this is a universal punishment.* This is shown—

1. *In the case of individuals.* So David says of an incorrigible sinner, among other things: "He loved cursing, and it shall come unto him; and he would not have blessing, and it shall be far from him. And he put on cursing like a garment; and it went in like water into his entrails, and like oil in his bones."—*Ps. 108: 18*. Examples: Cain. God affectionately admonished him to control his passion, and to lay aside his hatred towards Abel, but in vain. Cain executed his design and slew his brother. What is the result of this crime? God pronounced his curse upon him, and it came upon him temporally and eternally. Judas the traitor. With what love did Jesus treat this Apostle, how much did he labor to turn him from his wicked purpose; he washed his feet, warned him repeatedly, represented to him the greatness of his sin, said to him in the moment he betrayed him: "Friend, whereunto art thou come? Dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"—*Matt. 26: 50*. But when everything proved unavailing to change his mind, Christ left him to his fate. What was his end? He despaired of pardon and hanged himself. A dissipated young man in Lancaster, England, who disregarded all wholesome admonitions, once saw in a dream, his father, who had died some time before, and who now with serious words commanded him to change

his wicked life. But the debauchee continued in his evil ways. He had the same dream again, but this time his father told him that St. Martin's day was appointed as the day of his death and judgment. The youth related his dream to his loose boon companions and ridiculed it. The day of St. Martin till far into the night he spent in drink and voluptuousness. When he awoke late in the morning from his carousal he jested about the dream, but behold he turned pale and was struck with apoplexy, which at once ended his life. If the unfortunate young man had looked in the almanac, he would have found that this day was also St. Martin's day, because the feast of Martin the Bishop follows immediately after that of Martin the Pope and Martyr. This is the end of every incorrigible sinner. God abandons him and he is lost.

2. *In entire families and races.* "The offspring of the ungodly shall not bring forth many branches, and make a noise as unclean roots upon the top of a rock."—*Eccles.* 40: 15. Example: Achab, who, at the instance of his impious wife Jezabel, had Naboth stoned to death, in order to take possession of his vineyard. The prophet Elias went and announced to him that he should perish with his whole family. And it came true. Achab was mortally wounded and died in his chariot and the dogs licked up his blood.—*III. Kings*, 22: 38. Jezabel by the orders of Jehu was thrown headlong out of a window, and the hoofs of the horses trod upon her, and her flesh was eaten by dogs.—*IV. Kings* 9. Jehu also commanded the seventy sons of Achab to be killed, as well as all those that were left of the house of Achab in Jezrael, and all the great ones and all his acquaintances and all his priests, till not one of them was left.—*IV. Kings*, 10. We see it to-day yet, how many a family in which there is no religion nor fear of God, but irreligion, injustice, sin and vice, decays and finally dies out.

3. *In entire kingdoms.* Josue, the leader of the Israelites, conquered thirty-one kings, broke up their kingdoms, and destroyed their inhabitants.—*Jos.* 12. Afterwards, under the judges and the kings of the Israelites, the adjoining kingdoms were invaded and many of them destroyed. The cause of their downfall we find in the viciousness of those people. Their measure of sin was full, therefore they were rejected by God. If we peruse the history of the ancient world, we find the great and powerful kingdoms of the Assyrians, Medes, Persians, Greeks, and Romans, but all these kingdoms, which seemed to be founded for eternity, perished, and on their ruins others arose. All these kingdoms of the ancient world degenerated in the course of time and sunk into a pool of vices, and this was the reason why they were forsaken by God, and perished. The word of the prophet was verified:

"O Lord, all that forsake thee shall be confounded; they that depart from thee, shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the vein of living waters."—*Jer* 17: 13. An eloquent proof how God rejects whole nations if they reject him, we have in the Jewish people, who, for eighteen hundred years, are deprived of their country, are scattered over the whole earth, and live without a temple and altar, without prophets and kings, without truth and repentance.

4. *In whole Continents.* Christ sent his Apostles into all parts of the world, the Gospel was preached everywhere, and the nations congregated around the banner of the cross, from the rising to the setting of the sun. How gloriously did Christianity flourish in Asia and Africa! How many divines and Saints had the Church in those countries! And now those two continents for the greater part are sunk in the darkness of paganism and heresy, and not only in single provinces, but in whole countries the Christian religion is extinguished. And what is the aspect of Europe? Has the holy Catholic Church not lost millions of her children, partly by the Greek schism in the ninth, and partly by the great defection in the sixteenth century? Even in our days has not hell sent its emissaries over all Europe in order to root up Christianity, and to build up a Babel of unbelief and vice? Unless the nations of Europe give up their worldly-mindedness, and become more zealous in the business of salvation, it is to be feared that God will forsake them, and that they will entirely lose the grace of faith.

#### PERORATION.

Thus you see that if man continues in his wicked career and is not amended by admonitions and benefits, by corrections and punishments, God forsakes him and delivers him to perdition. It is a *terrible*, a *just*, and a *universal punishment*. A *terrible punishment*; for although the sinner whom God has forsaken might yet be converted, he is not; he sinks deeper and deeper into vice, and more and more heaps the anger of God upon his execrable head. It is a *just punishment*, for such a sinner deserves, on account of his continued impenitence and the oft-repeated abuse of God's grace, nothing else than that God should forsake him. A *universal punishment*, which God has inflicted, and still inflicts, on individual persons, families, races, and entire kingdoms and continents. Let us ponder this serious truth and beware of arousing the wrath of God and, as it were, compelling him to forsake us. If we have sinned, let us do true penance without delay, and let us employ the holy season of Lent for our reconciliation with God, that it may become to us a time of salvation. Amen

## PASSION SUNDAY.

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## 7. MORAL SKETCH.

## THE WAY OF THE CROSS.

*"The Jews took stones to cast at Jesus."—John 8: 59:*

This Sunday is called, in the language of the Church, "Judica Sunday, or Passion Sunday." It is called "Judica Sunday" because the Introit of the Mass begins with the word "Judica," which is the first word of a psalm of David, that relates to the Passion of Christ. The Church, in using this psalm, or rather two verses of it, as the Introit of this Sunday's Mass, indicates that in this holy time we should occupy ourselves particularly with the veneration and meditation of the bitter Passion and death of Christ. Of this we are manifestly reminded by the other name which this Sunday has, viz.: Passion Sunday. The gospel of to-day also directs our attention to the Passion of the Lord, for what it relates occurred shortly before his death. The leaders of the Jews had already decreed that Jesus should die; they only watched for a favorable opportunity of executing their design. This was the reason why he hid himself, the time in which he should suffer and die not yet having come.

You should, during the last two weeks of Lent, venerate the bitter Passion and death of Jesus with greater fervor than ever. For this the devotion of the Way of the Cross is especially suitable, and of it I intend to speak to you to-day. I shall show you that the holy Way of the Cross is,

- I. A very venerable, and*
- II. A very useful devotion.*

*The Way of the Cross is a very venerable devotion—*

*i. On account of its origin.* From whom does the holy Way of the Cross come? From Jesus Christ, who first went this way. Having been condemned to death by Pilate, a cross was laid on his shoulders, which he carried to Calvary, to accomplish on it the work of our Redemption. The distance from the palace of Pilate, where he began the Way of the Cross, to the place where he was crucified, was about twenty-seven hundred feet, a little over half a mile. This was a painful way for our dear Saviour, who on account of the sufferings which he had already endured, especially during his inhuman scourging, was prostrated and exhausted; every step he made onward required the

greatest exertion and caused him the most excruciating pains, his whole body being covered with wounds.

From this way which Christ went, the Way of the Cross has its name. As often as we perform the devotion of the Way of the Cross, we call to our mind Christ, who, loaded with the cross, went the way to Mount Calvary, to die for us poor sinners, and by his death on the cross to redeem us from eternal death. We also think of his words: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."—*Mark 8: 34*. As we read in the Gospel, Mary, his mother, John, his beloved disciple, Mary Magdalen and several other pious women, accompanied him on his Way of the Cross. And in the life of the Blessed Virgin we read, that after the Ascension of her divine Son into heaven, she often went to Calvary, considering with the deepest emotion the pains which he endured on that way. We certainly do well if we follow, with Mary and other holy souls, our divine Saviour on his painful journey to Calvary, and diligently perform the devotion of the Way of the Cross.

2. *On account of its extension.* Even in the earliest times, pious Christians from all countries journeyed to Jerusalem, there to visit the holy places, and especially to retrace the way on which Christ, laden with the cross, went to death for us. Later on pictures of the stations were erected along the Way of the Cross, at a distance of thirty, fifty, a hundred or more steps, at which the people stopped for some time and devoutly contemplated the mystery represented by the picture. When, at a later period, the Saracens conquered the Holy Land, and the visit to the holy places was rendered impossible, station pictures were also erected in other places, in order to give the faithful an opportunity for contemplating the Way of the Cross. The first who did this were the Franciscans. Gradually this custom spread far and wide, and to-day there is scarcely a church in which you will not find the Stations of the Cross. Five Popes, Innocent XII., Benedict XIII., Clement XII., Benedict XIV., and Clement XIV., have not only sanctioned, but also very earnestly recommended the devotion of the Way of the Cross to the faithful.

## PART II.

The Way of the Cross is a very *useful* devotion.

1. For even in the beginning many found their salvation in it.

(a.) *Simon of Cyrene*, who assisted our faint and weakened Saviour to carry the cross. He was a peasant, who had settled near Jerusalem. Our Lord rewarded him with the gift of faith for this act of charity. His two sons, also, Alexander and Rufus, became Christians, and ac-

according to reliable accounts, Rufus died as bishop of Tortosa in Spain, and Alexander as a martyr in Rome.

(b.) The pious woman, *Veronica*. There can be no doubt that our Lord repaid the love with which in compassion she wiped his disfigured countenance, not only by imprinting his countenance in her veil, but also by calling her to the true faith and eternal salvation.

(c.) *The good thief on the cross, called Dismas*. Scarcely had he prayed, full of compunction, faith and humility: "Lord, remember me, when thou shalt come into thy kingdom," when he heard from the mouth of Jesus the consoling words: "Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise."—*Luke 23: 43*.

(d.) The *centurion*, who was in command of the soldiers when Christ was led from Jerusalem to Calvary. Seeing the earth quake and the other miracles at the crucifixion of Christ, he was filled with a holy fear and exclaimed: "Indeed this was the Son of God."—*Matt. 27: 54*.

(e.) *The people who were witnesses of the crucifixion*. "And all the multitude of them that were come together to that sight, and saw the things that were done, returned striking their breasts."—*Luke 23: 48*. This striking of their breasts was undoubtedly a sign of a believing heart and sincere contrition, and shortly after, at the sermon of St. Peter on the feast of Pentecost, it caused several thousands to become converted.

(f.) Finally, the *two pious councilmen, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus*, who took the sacred body of Jesus from the cross, and laid it in the sepulchre. This work of charity was certainly rewarded here and hereafter.

2. *On the way of the cross, that is, by the devotion of the Way of the Cross, in which we venerate our suffering and dying Saviour, we also can find our salvation*. What are we doing when we perform the Way of the Cross? We contemplate the bitter Passion and death of Christ; we are sorry for our sins, which were the cause of his suffering and death, we thank him for the infinite love and mercy with which he under so great pains, shed his blood for us, we ask for grace and pardon, and we promise him repentance and amendment. These exercises which we perform at the contemplation of the bitter Passion and death of Jesus, are wholesome.

(a.) *For sinners*. How should the sinner not be moved to repentance when he considers the justice of God, which, on the one hand, manifests itself by this, that Christ, the innocent, the infinitely holy

and incarnate Son of God, having once taken upon himself the sins of the world, for the expiation of them was obliged to suffer so much and die so ignominious and painful a death, and when he considers on the other hand, the boundless love with which Christ suffered and died for the Redemption of sinful man? For this reason the Fathers of the Church and all spiritual writers say that nothing spurs us on so powerfully to penance and conversion as meditation on the Passion of Christ. St. Bonaventure says: "Nothing is more salutary than every day to meditate on the excess of the pains which Christ suffered for the love of us. The wounds of Christ move even the hardest and inflame the iciest hearts." Hippolitus Galeatinus, a pious priest of Florence, had a picture which represented the head of Christ crowned with thorns. He stood before it many an hour during the day, and, with profound devotion, contemplated the infinite love of Jesus towards us. On the opposite side of the street lived a vain daughter of the world who, because she believed the priest was looking at himself so often in a mirror, was scandalized, and maliciously hinted to him that she would like to see the mirror. The priest at once went for the picture and brought it to her house. But when she beheld the image of our Redeemer, with a crown of thorns on his head, with tears in his eyes, with livid lips, with a countenance covered all over with spittle, dust, perspiration, and blood, in so pitiable a plight that he no longer resembled a man—she was moved. But the priest said: "Behold, you have the desired mirror, behold yourself in it daily. If this mirror makes no impression upon you and moves you not to repentance, you will be lost. Contemplate in this countenance how much your Saviour suffered for your pride and vanity. Behold here, with your own eyes, him to whom one day you must give an account of all the souls whom you have scandalized and seduced." The sight of the picture of our suffering Redeemer, and the serious words of the priest, made so deep an impression upon this worldly-minded woman that she began bitterly to bewail her sins, threw herself at the feet of the priest and begged his pardon. She afterwards went to a convent and led a penitential life. Oh, if all frivolous worldlings and sinners would frequently meditate on the Passion and death of Christ, it would be strange if they did not renounce their worldly and sinful life and be thoroughly converted.

(b.) *For the just.* Meditating on the Passion of Christ we see what a terrible evil sin is, and we are led to detest it above all things; we are moved by the love with which Christ suffered and died for us, and we promise him love, fidelity, and imitation. We see the most glorious model of all virtues, and are inspired to practice these virtues. With justice, therefore, St. Bonaventure says: "If you, O man, wish to as-

cend from virtue to virtue, and lead a perfect life, meditate daily on the Passion of Christ, since nothing urges the soul so powerfully to sanctity as this exercise. A certain virgin of noble extraction, once upon a time wished to enter a very austere Order. To try her vocation, the superior gave her a terrible description of the severity of the monastic life, conducted her in spirit into all the apartments of the community, and showed her only those things which must appear awful to secular people. The virgin seemed overawed and spoke not a word. "My daughter," said the superior, "why do you not answer me?" To which the virgin, with vivacity, replied: "I have only one question to ask: are there any crucifixes in the convent? Shall I find a crucifix in that cell, which is so narrow, where I must sleep on hard wood—in that refectory, where the food is so coarse—in that chapter-room, where one receives so severe reprimands?" "Yes, my daughter," answered the superior, "In all these apartments there are crucifixes." Then the virgin said: "Oh, my Mother! where I find a crucifix, I hope to find nothing difficult." This is a great truth, a look upon Jesus crucified overcomes all, and renders the most difficult thing tolerable, nay, easy. He who devoutly contemplates the Passion and death of Jesus is encouraged and strengthened to the following of Christ, in every situation of life, so that he can say with the Apostle: "Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword?"—*Rom. 8: 35.*

#### PERORATION.

Yes; the meditation of the Passion and death of Jesus is a very useful devotion for every one, for the sinner as well as for the just man. I exhort you, therefore, to love and practice diligently the devotion of the Way of the Cross, in which the Passion and death of Jesus Christ are vividly brought before our eyes. Many and great indulgences are attached to this devotion. Popes Clement XII. and Benedict XIV. have declared: "That every one who is solicitous to contemplate the bitter Passion of the Lord by means of this holy devotion, gains all the indulgences which he could win by a personal visit of the stations at Jerusalem." This is another reason for the practice of the devotion of the Way of the Cross. Be not content with performing this devotion only in Lent, but perform it also at other times of the year, at home and in the church, just as it best suits you. But endeavor to perform it always with great interior recollection, with compunction of heart and pious sentiments, that you may gain the spiritual graces and blessings attached to it. Amen.



## PALM SUNDAY.

**EPISTLE.** *Phil. 2: 5-11.* Brethren. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but debased himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above every name (*here kneel*): that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.

## 1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

## THE HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION OF CHRIST.

A vision was once shown to St Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia, standing and beseeching him, said: "Pass over into Macedonia and help us." After this vision St. Paul went to Macedonia, with Luke and Silvanus, being assured that God had called him to preach the Gospel in that country. His labor was blessed; a congregation was soon formed at Philippi, an important city in Macedonia. St. Paul knew how to win their hearts, so that all clung to him with tender affection and gave him great alms. Hearing afterwards of his captivity, they sent to him a zealous Christian, named Epaphroditus, with alms. He brought the Apostle tidings of the flourishing condition of the Christian congregation at Philippi, which gave him great consolation. When Epaphroditus returned, Paul handed him a letter to the Philippians, in which he admonishes them to humility and concord, and warns them, with the affection of a father, against false teachers, who soon after arose among them and caused disturbance.

We shall consider the lesson of to-day, which is a small portion of this epistle. It treats—

- I. *On the humiliation of Christ;*
- II. *On his exaltation.*

## PART I.

Concerning the humiliation of Christ, the Apostle writes: "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery himself to be equal to God, but debased himself, taking the form of a servant, being made to the likeness of men, and*

*n shape found as a man. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*" I will first explain these words of the Apostle, and then draw some salutary lessons from them.

### 1. *Explanation.*

(a.) The Apostle says that Christ, when he was in the form of God, thought it no robbery himself to be equal to God. Christ was "*in the form of God*," that is, as St. Paul elsewhere says, he was the splendor of the glory of the Father and the figure of his substance.—*Heb. i. 3* He was, according to his divine nature, of the same substance with the Father, truly God, and therefore in possession of all the divine perfections. By his declaration that he and the Father are one, that the same honor is due to him as to the Father, in a word, that he is truly God, he did not arrogate to himself something which was not due him, as robbers do who unjustly appropriate to themselves the goods of others. Jesus, being truly God, could call himself God, and claim divine honor for himself, without infringing on the Godhead of the Father and the Holy Ghost. The Word remained God after he became man. He became man, but he has not on that account ceased to be God, but only united his humanity, that is, his soul and body, indissolubly with the Divinity. He was, therefore, whilst he sojourned on earth, suffered and died, the Son of God, true God, as he was before his Incarnation and from all eternity.

(b.) The Apostle says that Christ debased himself, assumed the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in shape found as a man. Christ is and remains God, but he *debased himself* that is, he laid aside all the splendor of his Godhead, and made himself, who possessed all, as one who possesses nothing. *He took the form of a servant.* He could as man have come upon earth in worldly splendor and opulence; he could have surrounded himself with prerogatives; he could have enjoyed all the pleasures of life; but he refused to do so; he voluntarily chose a poor, humble state, the condition of a servant: as he himself says, he came, not to be ministered to, but to minister. He would take upon himself all the infirmities and frailties of men, sin alone excepted; he would assume a body subject to hunger and thirst, fatigue and pain, and which could suffer and die, like the bodies of other men; he would assume a soul which was capable of interior sufferings, such as fear, anguish, sadness, like the souls of other men. Thus did Christ, for the love of us, debase himself.

(c.) Finally, the Apostle says that Jesus humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. "*Jesus humbled himself.*" This means that his humiliation was an entirely vol-

untary act. No one would have compelled or could compel him to become man, to live upon earth in such poverty and lowliness, to endure so many sufferings and tribulations; he did this of his own free will; his love and mercy for us were the cause of his humiliation. And how far did this humiliation go? Hear, and be amazed:

First, *he was obedient*. If a king should step down from his throne, and instead of commanding, should obey, not a conqueror, but the least of his subjects, every one would be astonished at such an obedience. But the obedience of Christ is infinitely more admirable, because he is no temporal king, but the Son of God and King of heaven and earth. And this great Lord and God appears in the form of a servant on earth and obeys, not only his heavenly Father ("My meat is to do," etc.—*John* 4: 34), but also his foster-father, St. Joseph, and his mother, Mary.—*Luke* 2: 57. He even obeys a pagan power and submits himself to men, who most unjustly condemn him to death. Is there not an infinite self-humiliation and self-debasement in this incomprehensible obedience?

Secondly, *he became obedient unto death*. His obedience was not confined to a few years, but embraced his whole life, and lasted without any interruption till death. His obedience went so far that he would also die. Free from even the shadow of sin, he was not like the rest of men, subject to death, and if he died, it was not from necessity, but from choice, wherefore he says himself: "No one taketh my life away from me, but I lay it down myself."—*John* 10: 18.

Thirdly, *he became obedient, even unto the death of the cross*. He was not content with dying a natural death. His obedience went so far that he would die the most ignominious and painful death, the death on the cross.

In this manner did Jesus debase and humble himself, leaving us an example, that we should follow his footsteps.—*I. Pet.* 2: 21.

## 2. Salutory lessons.

(a.) Christ was the Son of God, true God, but he debased himself, made no ostentation of his prerogatives, boasted not of them, but rather concealed them, appearing upon earth in the form of a servant. Let us guard against self-conceit and boasting; if we have anything good in us, let us not ascribe it to ourselves, for it is a gratuitous gift of God: "What hast thou that thou hast not received, and if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"—*I. Cor.* 4: 7. If we do anything good, let us keep it secret, at least let us not seek human praise for it, that we may not lose our reward for it before God.

(b.) Christ so far humbled himself that he *took the form of a ser-*

*vant.* How humiliating is this for so many Christians, who desire to be more than they are, who dress beyond their means, who deck themselves out in the most fashionable clothing, unsuited to their calling; or who, in order to go forward and ascend higher, do not hesitate to slander and calumniate others, to undermine them, and to commit various injustices. Consider how vain and perishable is all human greatness; how Lucifer, because he would exalt himself above God, was humbled into the abyss of hell; how no one who is not unpretending and little in his own eyes, can please God and be a true disciple of Christ. Aspire not to human greatness, but to virtue and sanctity.

(c.) Our divine Saviour humbled himself and became *obedient*. Self-humiliation is the foundation of obedience. That there reigns among men so much self-will and disobedience comes from pride; for the proud man pretends to know everything better than others, wants others to adapt themselves to him, and wishes to rule, but not to obey. If, therefore, you wish to acquire the great and necessary virtue of obedience, you must learn to deny yourselves and to be humble of heart. Consider how much depends on obedience; the least work that is done from obedience is pleasing to God and is rewarded by him, but whatever is done from self-will and against obedience, is worthless before God and deserves punishment rather than reward. Children should consider this well.

(d.) Christ was obedient *unto death*, therefore, throughout his life. There are many who, when they are grown up, will no longer hear of obedience and submission; there are children who tell their parents to their face: "I am no longer a child. I know what I have to do; you have no authority to command me." How different was the disposition of Jesus! he was obedient for thirty-three years—till the last moment of his life. You must know that so long as one is a subject and has superiors, he must obey; he who does not persevere in obedience to the end, can not be saved. Christ was obedient unto death; he died voluntarily, out of obedience to his heavenly Father, in order to accomplish the work of our Redemption. For us death is a stern necessity, we must die, whether we are willing or not; let us be ready to die according to the example of the Saints, because God wills it, that our death may become a sacrifice acceptable to God and profitable to ourselves. Let us pray, not only with the lips, but also with the heart: Jesus, for thee I live, Jesus, for thee I die; Jesus, to thee I belong living and dead.

(e.) Christ was obedient unto the death of the cross. God, the heavenly Father, willed that his Son should become man and die on

the cross, and our dear Lord did on earth the will of his Father, and became obedient unto the death of the cross. Is there an obedience in heaven or on earth that could equal this obedience! If, therefore, obedience should demand of us a sacrifice, and oblige us to something humiliating and painful, we must make the sacrifice. One look at Jesus on the cross will make light and easy every act of obedience, no matter how difficult in itself.

## PART II.

Exaltation follows humiliation, for Christ says: "He that will humble himself, shall be exalted."—*Matt. 23: 12*. Because Jesus had humbled himself he was exalted. This exaltation, however, is to be understood only of his humanity; for his Divinity, being essentially unchangeable, could not be exalted. Let us now consider what St. Paul says of the exaltation of Christ.

1. *God hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above every name.* The exaltation of Christ took place in his glorious Resurrection and Ascension. God the Father did not permit his so deeply humbled and crucified Son to moulder in the grave; he raised him on the third day from the dead, gave him a glorified and immortal body, assumed him into heaven, placed him at his right hand, and exalted him as man above everything created, and made him partake of his power and the glory of his majesty. Of this exaltation, the Apostle says elsewhere: "(God) Raising him up from the dead, and setting him at his right hand in the heavenly places, above all principality, and power, and virtue, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and he hath put all things under his feet, and hath made him head over all the Church, which is his body."—*Ephes. 1: 20-23*. The Apostle, in saying of Christ that God has given him a name that is above every other name, intimates his dignity, which transcends all created greatness and all the prerogatives of creatures, because he has made him Lord of heaven and earth.

Here we perceive how pleasing to God are humility and self-abasement, and how richly he rewards them. If sometimes it is difficult to subdue the motions of ambition and pride and to bear humiliations, let us remember the great reward which humility will receive hereafter. Why should we not love to be unknown in the world and to occupy the last place rather than the first, since we shall one day be exalted the more, the more we now humble ourselves? Why should we not patiently bear all humiliations, since they merit for us an eternal glory in heaven?

2. The Apostle goes on to say, "*that in the name of Jesus every*

*knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and in hell."*

All created beings, whoever and wherever they may be, the Angels and Saints in heaven, men upon earth, the souls in purgatory, the evil spirits and the damned in hell, must recognize the supreme power and glory of Christ and adore him, either voluntarily and from love, as do the Angels and Saints in heaven, the souls in purgatory, and orthodox Christians upon earth, or involuntarily, as the evil spirits, the damned in hell, and the wicked upon earth, who now indeed abuse and blaspheme his holy name, but who will be compelled on the day of judgment to adore him. This passage of the Apostle attests also the truth of the article of faith, that to Christ, according to his humanity, the same adoration is due that is due to him according to his Divinity, because the human nature in Christ is so intimately united to his divine nature that the humanity does not exist separate for itself, but has its existence only in the personality of the Son of God, so that there is but one person, the divine Person, uniting in himself the two natures, the human and the divine.

Render to your divine Saviour always the veneration and adoration due him. Never pronounce the most holy name of Jesus otherwise than with the greatest reverence, and show this reverence also externally by bowing your head according to the ordinance of the Church. If you come into the presence of the most holy Sacrament of the Altar, bend your knees and adore Jesus, your Lord and God, present under the appearance of bread. Honor the name of Jesus also by doing all for his love, according to the admonition of the Apostle: "Whatsoever you do in word or work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.—Col. 2: 17.

3. Our lesson concludes with the words of the Apostle: "*Every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.*" When Christ sojourned upon earth, taught, and wrought miracles, many did not believe in him nor acknowledge him as the Son of God; when he hung on the cross, the respect was even refused him which is usually accorded to others; he was overwhelmed with contumely and derision, and treated worse than the greatest malefactor. But now, being risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, all things are changed, heaven and earth confess that he is God and possesses with God the same power, glory, and majesty. And though there are some who neither believe in him nor do him homage as the Son of God and Redeemer of the world, the time will come when, in terror and despair, they must believe in him and adore him.

In our days we meet men everywhere, but especially in cities, who deny the Divinity of Christ and look upon him merely as the Wise Man of Nazareth; nay, some go even farther and blaspheme him as an im-

postor. Woe to those wicked men! On the day of judgment, when Jesus shall come again with great power and majesty as the judge of the living and the dead, they shall be seized with fear and anguish, and filled with terror and despair, will cry out to the mountains and hills: "Ye mountains, fall upon us; ye hills, cover us." Let us then adhere to him with a believing heart and confess him before men, that he may also confess us before God, his heavenly Father.

#### PERORATION.

Let us conclude with the words with which the lesson of this day begins: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Jesus Christ." Jesus Christ humbled himself, he, the Son of God, hid his divine dignity and lived as man in poverty and humility, suffered contumely, and died as a malefactor on the cross. So deeply did the Son of God humble himself! But this humiliation was the way to his exaltation; now he sits at the right hand of God, crowned with honor and glory, and all creatures in heaven, upon earth, and under the earth, adore him. Let us follow him, despise the honor of the world, banish all pride and vanity out of our hearts, and walk on the way of humility and self-denial, that the word of Jesus may be verified in us: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Amen.

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#### PALM SUNDAY.

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**GOSPEL.** (*Matt. 21: 1-9.*) At that time: When Jesus drew nigh to Jerusalem, and was come to Bethphage, unto Mount Olivet; then he sent two disciples, saying to them: Go ye into the village that is over against you, and immediately ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her; loose them, and bring them to me; and if any man shall say anything to you, say ye that the Lord hath need of them, and forthwith he will let them go. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet, saying: Tell ye the daughter of Sion, behold thy king cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of her that is used to the yoke. And the disciples going, did as Jesus commanded them. And they brought the ass and the colt, and laid their garments upon them, and made him sit thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; and others cut boughs from the trees, and strewed them in the way; and the multitudes that went before and that followed, cried, saying: Hosanna to the Son of David! blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

## 2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

### CHRIST'S TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

The gospel for this day speaks of the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem. The High Council had decreed his death and made preparations to apprehend him. But our divine Saviour, his hour not having yet come, "went into the country near the desert unto a city that is called Ephraim, and there abode with his disciples."—*John* 11: 54. The pasch being at hand, that is, the time when he would accomplish the work of our Redemption by his death on the cross, he left the solitude and went with his disciples to Jerusalem. He marked his way thither with corporal and spiritual blessings, healing two blind men at Jericho, converting Zacheus, and instructing the people that followed him. He came to Bethphage, a village situated near Mount Olivet, and only half a mile distant from Jerusalem. This is the place where the lambs which were to be sacrificed in the temple on the following Friday were kept, and whence, five days before Easter, the Paschal lambs were solemnly led into the city. From this village, and on the same day, Christ would make his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, in order to offer himself on the Paschal feast of the Jews, that is, on our Good Friday, as the true Paschal Lamb for us on the cross.

Let us make a short meditation on the contents of to-day's gospel:

- I. *On the preparation of Christ for his entry into Jerusalem;*
- II. *On his entry itself.*

#### PART I.

Christ sent from Bethphage two of his disciples, saying to them: "*Go ye into the village that is over against you, and immediately you shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her; loose them, and bring them to me. And if any man shall say anything to you, say ye that the Lord hath need of them, and forthwith he will let them go.*"—*Matt.* 21: 1-4.

(a.) The village into which our Lord sent his disciples was probably Bethania, which, like Bethphage, was situated at the foot of Mount Olivet, and about three-quarters of a mile distant from Jerusalem. There lived Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead, and his sisters Martha and Mary Magdalen. Our Lord had frequently stopped with them, and in his last days remained there several times over night. Envious brother and sisters, whom Christ favored with his gracious presence! Christian parents, if good discipline and the



fear of God rule in your houses, Christ will come to you and bring you graces and blessings.

(b.) The Lord sent *two of his disciples*. According to tradition, these two disciples were Peter and John. By this it is indicated that God employs for the execution of his purposes those who are the fittest. Peter excelled especially *by his faith*, and John *by his love*. If we have a strong faith and an ardent love, we will be capable of doing great things for the honor of God and the salvation of our fellow-men. Examples: St. Francis Xavier, St. Alphonsus.

(c.) Our Lord sent two of his disciples *to bring two asses*. A menial service. This should be a lesson to us that everything is great and meritorious in the eyes of God which is done from a motive of obedience and love. The two disciples who went by the order of their Master to bring two asses, pleased God as much as when afterwards they went out to preach the Gospel and to work miracles. We must never be ashamed of humble occupations, or submit to them ungraciously. Example: Christ washed his disciples' feet; many of the Saints were of the highest rank in society, yet, for the love of Christ and to exercise themselves in patience, performed the most menial works, such as gathering alms, sweeping the house, washing dishes, etc. St. Bonaventure was washing dishes in the kitchen of the monastery, when the cardinal's hat was brought to him.

(d.) Christ ordered his disciples to loose the asses which they should find tied, and to bring them to him. By this the vocation of the Apostles and their successors is clearly indicated. The ass, that is, the Jews, and the colt, the Gentiles, and, in them, all men, were tied with the cords of unbelief and sin; of themselves they could not loose the bonds, any more than a tethered ass could loose itself; this could be effected only through the Apostles and their successors, to whom Christ gave the grace and commission to preach the Gospel and to administer the means of salvation, whereby men are brought to the knowledge of God and justified. Show yourselves grateful to Christ for having given you priests and pastors of souls, and be zealous in hearing the word of God and in the reception of the Sacraments.

(e.) The Lord told his disciples *that they would find an ass and a colt, and upon their assurance that the Lord needed them, the owner would let them go*. Christ gives here a proof of his prescience and omniscience, and, consequently, of his Divinity, showing that he had the most perfect knowledge of absent and future things. Remember always that he is everywhere and knows all things, and therefore never do anything of which you would have reason to be ashamed before him.

2. The Evangelist refers to the passage of the Prophet Zachary in which the entry of Christ into Jerusalem is foretold: "*All this was done that the word might be fulfilled, which was spoken of by the prophet, saying: Tell ye the daughter of Sion: Behold thy king cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of her that is used to the yoke.*"

(a.) The daughter of Sion is Jerusalem, but the king who comes to her is the Messiah. As this prediction of the prophet, who lived five hundred years before the birth of Christ, has been fulfilled, it is a proof that he is truly the Messiah, and Redeemer of the world, foretold and sent by God.

(b.) The prophet foretells of Christ, that he comes *meek*; this means that the Messiah would not conquer and maintain his kingdom by the force of arms, but by meekness and love. Christ wills not that the holy faith should be forced upon nations or individuals; on the contrary, they were to be taught with all meekness and love, and be induced voluntarily to receive the faith. The Church of God has never used force or compulsion in preaching the Gospel, and if temporal rulers have sometimes compelled unbelievers and heretics to embrace the faith, she has always disapproved it. The Church teaches, admonishes, entreats, and prays, but disdains all compulsory measures; *she has martyrs, but makes no martyrs*. Herein the Church differs and distinguishes herself from the Turks and many sects that endeavored to propagate their religion with fire and sword, and under threats and the infliction of the severest punishments. She is unjustly reproached with intolerance; she combats and condemns only the error, but not the erring.

(c.) Zachary, by representing the Messiah as sitting upon an ass, that is, the foal of an ass, indicates the quality of the kingdom of Christ. In the East, in times of peace, the ass was used for riding, for the labors in the field, and for other peaceful occupations: the ass therefore, is a picture of the kingdom of Christ as a kingdom of peace, security, and quietude. For this reason Christ came into the world when there was peace in the whole Roman Empire; at his birth the Angels intoned the chant of peace, and he says of himself that he brought peace and made his Apostles messengers of peace. "Into whatsoever house you enter, first say: Peace be to this house."—*Luke* 10; 5. Christ is truly the Prince of Peace, for he has made peace between heaven and earth, between God and men, making satisfaction for men and reconciling them with God; he has acquired peace for the heart of man by taking away sin, the only source of the interior disquietude and trouble of conscience; finally, he has established peace

among men, by making charity the chief law of his religion. Let us make this threefold peace our own and keep it carefully.

(d.) Zachary speaks of an ass and her colt. As the Evangelists St. Mark (11: 7) and St. Luke (19: 35) remark, it was a colt upon which Christ entered into Jerusalem. The ass was only led along, because the colt was used to her. Why did Christ ride the colt, and not the ass? The ass signifies man, who had already sinned; but the colt, those souls who walk in perfect innocence and purity of morals. Christ does not reject sinners, if they do penance and are converted from their evil ways, but he enters into more intimate relations with entirely pure and innocent souls; he prefers them and gives them graces which he does not bestow on others, for they are his favorite children. Consider this, young Christians, and preserve innocence of the heart. Those who have lost their innocence must humble themselves and endeavor by penance to become worthy to walk beside the innocent and with them to enter into heaven.

## PART II.

Let us consider the Messiah's entrance into Jerusalem.

1. *"The disciples going, did as Jesus commanded them. And they ought the ass and the colt, and laid their garments upon them, and made him sit thereon."* They laid their garments upon the asses for the accommodation of Christ, and thus not only furnished him with a saddle, but also somewhat caparisoned the animals out of reverence for him. Spiritual writers understand by the garments which the disciples laid upon the asses the sanctifying grace with which the soul is adorned in the Sacraments of Baptism and Penance, and of which Christ takes possession. How is it with us? Have we preserved this garment of sanctifying grace? Alas! most of us possess it no longer; in the levity of our lives and in our contact with the world we have frequently and grievously offended God and lost his grace. But we have recovered it again by a contrite and sincere confession. Should there be any who, after their confessions, have again lost the garment of grace, let them avail themselves of the present Easter time for their reconciliation with God—make a good confession, and receive communion with a heart well prepared, that they may recover the garment of sanctifying grace.

2. As the disciples, so also the multitude of people showed their reverence for Christ, *"for they spread their garments in the way, and others cut down boughs from the trees and strewed them in the way."* It may be asked: Why were there so many people present at his entrance into Jerusalem? This may be attributed partly to the fact that

it was the time of the pasch, for the celebration of which great multitudes of pilgrims journeyed on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem, and partly because the news had got abroad that Christ, the prophet endowed with miraculous powers, who a few days before had raised Lazarus from the dead after he had been already four days in the grave, was on his way to Jerusalem, wherefore all in the neighborhood flocked together to see and accompany him. This spreading of the garments and the strewing of boughs of trees was a custom in the East by which they expressed their reverence, joy, and loyalty at the entry of a monarch. The multitude, therefore, by divesting themselves of their garments and strewing the way with them and the boughs of trees, manifested their belief in Christ as the promised Messiah, and paid him homage as their Lord and Redeemer. The garments which the people spread in the way, according to Albertus Magnus, signify *our bodies*. The holy martyrs, he says, spread garments of *scarlet*, because for the love of Christ they delivered their bodies to a bloody death; the confessors, of the color of *hyacinth*, because they emaciated themselves by fasting and watching, and raised their hearts heavenward; and the virgins, *brilliantly white*, because they immolated their undefiled bodies to their heavenly Bridegroom. What they did, we also must do; with the holy martyrs we must mortify ourselves interiorly and exteriorly; with the confessors we must with zeal devote ourselves to the service of God; and with the virgins we must observe the chastity of our state of life.

The *boughs* which the people strewed in the way signify the *works of mercy*. The branches were taken from palm or olive trees. As the palm-tree yields a cooling wine, and the olive a strengthening and healing oil, so Christian charity consoles and strengthens the afflicted, and mitigates and heals the sufferings of the wretched and miserable. Amidst palm and olive branches Christ entered into Jerusalem; he comes with grace and mercy to those who do works of mercy out of grateful love for him. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." What an incentive for us to show mercy towards the poor and needy!

The people accompanied Christ on his entry, going before and after him, and crying out: *Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*. The people greeting him as the Son of David, mean that he was a descendant of David, through whom, according to the promise of God, an eternal kingdom was to be established.—*Psalms 117: 26*. The word, "Hosanna," is a joyous exclamation and means "Hail," so that the meaning is: Hail to the Son of David! Literally, "Hosanna" means: "Oh, do redeem! redemption!" so that the meaning is: "Redeem, O God, the Son of David from his enemies (from the leaders of the Jews, who seek his life), and grant that he may redeem us."

The entrance of Christ into Jerusalem was indeed solemn, but how paltry and puerile when compared with the triumphal trains of temporal heroes! David and Solomon entered into the city on splendidly caparisoned steeds, accompanied by a multitude of proud horsemen, but our dear Lord enters Jerusalem upon a borrowed ass that never before had been used for riding, and we see the place of magnificent and royal equipage supplied by the poor garments of his disciples, his retinue consisting of people whom the world looks upon as the rabble and outcasts of society. Here we see how true are the words of Christ: "My kingdom is not of this world."—*John* 18: 36. The kingdom of Christ, the Church, is to be spread over all the world and to exist to the end of time, but, like her Founder, she is always to bear in herself the character of poverty and lowliness; only on the day of judgment will the hour of triumph come for this kingdom. We need not, therefore, wonder that the Catholic Church was from the beginning an object of disregard and contempt in the eyes of the world, and that especially in our days she is humbled and overwhelmed with derision and scoffs, for this is a clear proof of her being the kingdom of God, bearing as she does a conformity to her Founder.

Tertullian relates that the Gentiles, for the contumely of Christ and his followers, had a crucifix painted with asses' ears, whereby they would indicate that the Christians are asses because they adore a crucified man as God, the cross of Christ being a stumbling-block to the Jews, and folly to the Gentiles. But this must neither discourage us nor shake our faith; on the contrary, we should judge ourselves happy when we are deemed worthy to suffer ignominy for the name of Jesus.

#### PERORATION.

In conclusion, I would warn you against the inconstancy of men, who to-day receive Christ with shouts of joy, and accompany him to Jerusalem with loud hosannas, but who, after a few days, will unite with the clamor of his enemies: "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!"—*John* 19: 15. Oh, what pains must he have felt in his soul, when he was obliged to say to himself: "These people who gather around me with so much enthusiasm, and salute me as their king, will, at the end of this week, forsake me and demand my death." Oh, how must he feel when he sees that many of those who in this Easter time go to confession and communion and promise amendment of life, will, after a few weeks, perhaps days, return to their old sins and crucify him anew. Oh, beware of such inconstancy, which fills the affectionate heart of Jesus with the greatest sorrow, and labor that your last state does not become worse than the first. Therefore, I cry out to you with the words of the Apostle: "Therefore, my beloved

brethren, be ye steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."—*I. Cor. 15: 58.* Ame

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## PALM SUNDAY.

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# 3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

## ON SATISFACTION.

*"Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."*—*Matt. 21: 9.*

Our Blessed Lord, who on this day entered Jerusalem in a kind of triumph, and was there received with the loud hosannas and acclamations of the people, will also come to us in this holy Easter time; in holy communion, which in this time we must receive according to the law of the Church, he will come into our hearts and dwell there. But that we may prepare for him a worthy dwelling and become sharers of his graces, we must cleanse our souls from all mortal sins, and place ourselves in the state of sanctifying grace. For this reason, before we approach the table of the Lord we receive the Sacrament of Penance.

Of this Sacrament I have spoken already several times, and explained to you four parts which are required for its worthy reception. I come to-day to the fifth part, which is *satisfaction*. By satisfaction we understand the penance enjoined by the confessor. But we should not content ourselves with this penance, but also by voluntary penitential works, and by patience in sufferings, endeavor to satisfy the justice of God. I shall speak—

- I. *On the penance which the confessor imposes upon us ;*
- II. *On the penance which we must lay upon ourselves.*

## PART I.

Two questions are to be answered:

- I. *For what purpose does the confessor impose a penance on us ?*

(a.) *For the expiation of the temporal punishment of sin.* In the Sacrament of Penance God always remits the *eternal* punishment, with the sin, but he does not always remit the *temporal* punishment due to

it. We must do penance for it either here, or hereafter in purgatory. Herein Penance essentially differs from Baptism, in which not only all sins, but also all punishments, temporal and eternal, are remitted. The adversaries of our faith assert that the temporal and eternal punishments are always remitted with the sin, but the Sacred Scripture contradicts this, and by many examples teaches that God remits the sins, but nevertheless inflicts temporal punishments. Thus, God, through the intercession of Moses, forgave the Israelites their grievous sin, but excluded them from the promised land and let them die in the desert.—*Num.* 13. God forgave Moses the sin he had committed, but punished him by not allowing him to enter into the land of Chanaan.—*Num.* 20: 12. God remitted to David his sins, but punished him by the death of his son, and inflicted also other punishments on him. "The Lord hath taken away thy sin; nevertheless, the child that is born to thee shall surely die."—*II. Kings* 12: 13, 14.

That temporal punishments frequently remain after the remission of sin and the eternal punishment, has always been the doctrine of the Church. St. Augustine very beautifully says: "God holds three judgments, a judgment of mercy, a judgment of severity and justice, and a judgment mixed with both, that is, one in which justice is tempered with mercy and mercy with justice. The first, God exercises in Baptism, in which he remits sin and punishment, without satisfaction, to the sinner; the second, Christ will hold at the end of the world, when justice will preside at the tribunal and exercise its part with the utmost rigor; the third, God exercises in the Sacrament of Penance, in which he forgives the sinner his sin and frees him from hell, which he had deserved, but changes eternal into temporal punishment, and demands repentance." The Council of Trent teaches the same, and shows how it well becomes the justice and mercy of God, that in Baptism, but not in the Sacrament of Penance, all temporal punishments should be remitted to us.—*Sess.* 14. *Cap.* 8.

For these temporal punishments we must make satisfaction to the divine justice, or, in other words, we must perform penitential works. Here it is to be remarked, first, that we *can* satisfy the divine justice, because our penitential works, although of themselves incapable of satisfaction, have a satisfying and reconciling virtue, through the satisfaction of Christ.—*Council of Trent, Sess.* 14. *Cap.* 8. Secondly, that we *must* make satisfaction; for although Christ has satisfied superabundantly for our sins, this satisfaction will profit only those who apply it to themselves by penitential works. The words of Christ remain in force: "Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish."—*Luke* 13: 3. We must, therefore, diligently perform the penance enjoined on us by the confessor, in order to satisfy the divine justice for our sins and to make ourselves worthy of his mercy: for he

remits to us sin and its eternal punishment, only on the condition that we have a sincere will of satisfying his justice. If we faithfully perform the penance imposed upon us, God will remit to us also at least a part of the temporal punishment.

(b.) *For the amendment of our life.*

Works of penitence are a punishment, and as such, a means of amendment, for these satisfactory punishments deter from evil. Moreover, all penitential works which the confessor lays upon us are *exercises of virtue and good works*, and consequently are means of amendment; for, the more we exercise ourselves in virtue, the weaker do our passions become, the stronger our Christian zeal and the love of God, and the more secure we are against relapse.

The works of penance which confessors enjoin, consist in *prayer, fasting, and alms-deeds*. Each one of these works is a powerful means of amendment. By prayer we can obtain every grace, especially the grace of overcoming all temptations, as Christ says: "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation."—*Matt. 26: 41*. Concerning fasting St. Augustine says: Fast purifies the mind, elevates the soul, subdues the flesh to the spirit, softens and humbles the heart, dispels the mist of sensuality, extinguishes the fire of concupiscence, and kindles the light of chastity. The giving of alms is also an excellent means of amendment, for this work has its foundation in charity, which is the bond of perfection.

Finally, we must consider that the confessor, in order more certainly to effect an amendment by the imposition of penances, must have due regard to the quality of the sin, as well as to the disposition and the circumstances of the penitents, and prescribe to each such penances as appear to him the most suitable for the preservation from a relapse and for attaining perfection.

2. *What must especially induce us diligently to perform the penance laid upon us by the confessor?*

(a.) *The obedience which we owe the confessor.* Christ gave to his Apostles and their successors the power of binding and loosing.—*Matt. 18: 18*. From this it follows that confessors have the power of imposing upon sinners whom they loose from sins, certain obligations, and therefore also works of penance. Nay, they have even the duty to do so, for God does not remit sin in the Sacrament of Penance, as in Baptism, without satisfaction; he requires us to expiate the temporal punishments of sin by penitential works. Hence the Council of Trent expressly requires the priest to impose a penance on every penitent. Now, if the priest has the power, and if it is his duty to enjoin



a penance, what other conclusion follows except an obligation on our part to receive and perform the penance?

(b.) *The thought that the neglect of the penance enjoined might render the confession even invalid.* This would be the case if one before the absolution had already the will not to perform the penance imposed. The reason is because the will to make satisfaction is a necessary part of the Sacrament of Penance, and God does not remit sins to any one who is destitute of this will. From this it follows that the priest could not give absolution if the penitent would declare to him that he was not willing to perform the penance imposed. It is, however, lawful to ask the confessor for another penance, if the one imposed could, on account of particular circumstances, either not be performed at all, or only with the greatest difficulty.

(c.) *The great benefit which is connected with the diligent performance of the penance enjoined.* The penance imposed by the confessor is a part of the Sacrament of Penance; it has, therefore, a sacramental virtue and operates as infallibly as the priestly absolution. As this, if no obstacle be placed in the way, infallibly effects the forgiveness of sins and the eternal punishments due to them, so the diligent performance of the penance imposed by the confessor infallibly effects either the entire or a partial remission of the temporal punishments of sin. Who, then, would neglect to perform with care the penance imposed? I will here remark that the penance should be performed at the time appointed by the confessor. If an impediment occur which renders it impossible or very difficult to perform the penance at the appointed time, it may be performed at some other time. If the confessor has not appointed a certain time, we should perform it as soon as possible; for the penance is a debt, and the payment of debts must not be delayed.

## PART II.

With regard to the penance *which we must impose upon ourselves*, we have again two questions to answer:

### 1. *Why must we impose a penance upon ourselves?*

(a.) *Because the penance imposed by the confessor is, for the most part, not sufficient for the expiation of the temporal punishments of sin.*

In former times far severer penances were imposed upon penitents than in our days, the penances now being in no respect proportioned to the sins. The Church is well aware that far severer penances would be necessary to satisfy the justice of God and to blot out the temporal punishments of sin, but on account of the decreased zeal of Christians,

she enjoins only light ones. If she would proceed according to the ancient, severe canonical laws, many, from fear of the great penances, would confess no more, and many others after confession would neglect them, and thus, on account of the severe penances, many Christians would perish. The Church, knowing this, contents herself with light penances, preferring to send penitents into purgatory rather than risk their eternal loss. But, for the reason that the penances enjoined by the confessor are so light, we must impose penances upon ourselves, in order to supply by voluntary works what is wanting to the sacramental penance. If we neglect this, we shall be obliged to suffer so much the more in purgatory, and that without any merit for heaven. But is it not more expedient to take upon ourselves the little difficulties with which the practice of penance is connected here, than to suffer the unspeakable pains of purgatory hereafter?

(b.) *Because by the neglect of voluntary works of penance we deprive ourselves of much merit for heaven.* The poor souls in purgatory can in time expiate the temporal punishments of sin by their sufferings, but they can acquire no more merit for heaven. In the present life penitential works have a double advantage: they extinguish the fire of purgatory, and merit a greater glory in heaven. Who would not zealously perform voluntary penitential works?

(c.) *Because the neglect of voluntary penances exposes our salvation to danger.* He who shuns all austerities, and does not force himself to restrain his sensuality, will hardly be able to overcome all temptations and to guard himself against relapse. Moreover, on account of his tepidity, God will cause the graces to flow more sparingly, and so it may easily happen that he relapses into his former sins and perhaps never again rises from his fall.

## 2. *What are the penitential works we must practice?*

(a.) *Prayer, fasting, and alms-deeds.* By prayer we understand all the exercises of devotion and piety, private and public, the hearing of holy Mass and of the word of God, spiritual reading and meditation, the reception of the Sacraments, and daily examination of conscience. Fasting comprises all interior and exterior mortifications; and alms-giving, all the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. It is self-evident that these three classes of good works are very suitable for the expiation of the temporal punishments of sin. By three things God is offended: by the abuse of the soul, of the body, and of external goods. It is therefore expedient that we endeavor to be again reconciled to God by these three things, offering him a sacrifice of each of them. This is done by prayer, fasting, and alms-deeds.

By prayer we offer him our soul; by fasting, our body; and by alms-deeds, our external goods. "Prayer is good with fasting and alms, more than to lay up treasures of gold; for alms delivereth from death, and the same is that which purgeth away sins, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting."—*Tob. 12: 8, 9.*

(b.) *The various sufferings and hardships of life;* such as labor, hunger, thirst, cold, fatigue, sickness, pain, misfortune, accidents, oppressions and persecutions on the part of men; in short, all the tribulations of life. If we bear all these things with patience, in the spirit of penance, and for the love of God, we can daily blot out a part of the temporal punishment due to our sins and acquire many merits for heaven.

#### PERORATION.

This is the satisfaction which God requires of us after confession; you must not only diligently perform the penance enjoined on you by the confessor, but also lay voluntary penances upon yourselves. You must repair to the utmost of your power the scandal you have given and the injury you have unjustly done to your neighbor. If you perform these penitential works with zeal and perseverance, you will explate your temporal punishments more and more, acquire great merit for heaven, make progress on the way of virtue, and hereafter find your places among the elect in heaven. Amen.

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#### PALM SUNDAY.

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### 4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

#### THE CELEBRATION OF PALM SUNDAY.

*"Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."*—*Matt. 21: 9.*

With this Sunday we begin the last week of Lent, commonly called Passion Week or Holy Week. It is justly called Passion Week, for in it falls the bitter Passion and death of Christ, the memory of which to-day fills every believing heart with bitterness and sorrow. It is called Holy Week, because it is holy through Christ, who in it accomplished the work of our Redemption. Holy Week opens with Palm Sunday, which has its name from the blessing of the palms which

are carried in the solemn procession. The procession calls to our mind the entry of Christ into Jerusalem, where he was received with the loud hosannas and acclamations of the people: "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is that cometh in the name of the Lord." To-day in the holy Mass the history of the Passion is read for the first time, because Holy Week is the week in which we should particularly venerate and contemplate the Passion and death of Christ.

I shall speak to-day on the celebration of Palm Sunday, and give you the necessary explanation—

- I. On the procession with the blessed palm branches;*
- II. On the history of the Passion of the Lord.*

#### PART I.

Before mass the palms are blessed, immediately after which the procession takes place with the palms. Let us consider the procession.

- I. How it moves out of the church;*
- II. What takes place outside of the church;*
- III. How it returns into the church.*

1. The priest goes first in the procession of to-day; the people join in and follow him. All, with the blessed palm-branches in their hands, go out of the church. This ceremony has a deep significance.

(a.) The priest at the head of the procession represents Christ, the head of the Church. Those in the procession follow the priest, for Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life."—*John 14: 6*. We must follow him, if we wish to attain salvation: "My sheep hear my voice; and I know them, and they shall follow me."—*John 10: 26*.

(b.) The priest *goes out of the church*, whereby we are reminded of the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ. For as the priest leaves the church, so the only-begotten Son of God left heaven, as it were, becoming man, and walking upon earth in the form of a servant. His life for thirty-three years is an uninterrupted chain of sufferings and persecutions; finally he dies the most ignominious and painful death on the cross. Yet he suffers and dies with joy, for it regards the redemption of man, whom he loves most tenderly, and whose rescue he ardently longs for. You should think of all this when you see that the priest goes out of the church; and because you also, following the priest, leave the church, you should consider that, having sinned, you have no more any claim to heaven. You should make the resolution to open heaven for yourselves again by true repentance.

(c.) The priest and the faithful *carry palms in their hands*. Palm is

the emblem of victory, a victory that can be acquired only after a hard combat with the enemy. This sign of victory belongs principally to our Saviour, whom the priest represents, for he has overcome the world and the devil, and he triumphs now and forever at the right hand of God. We also carry palms in our hands, to signify that, after the example of Christ, we will bravely wrestle with the enemies of our salvation, and assisted by his grace, gain the victory with him.

2. When the procession is outside the church, the choir returns into the church, the church door is then locked, and the priest knocks three times with the cross at the door, when it is opened. What does all this mean?

(a.) The door of the church signifies the gate of heaven, which had been barred against mankind since the fall of Adam. No one in the Old Law could enter into heaven, no one was in it but the Angels, praising and glorifying God; and behold, the choir represents the Angels, which alone remains in the church, and there sings verses of psalms. Oh, how sad was the lot of man in the Old Law, how hard his death, since even the just could not enter into heaven!

(b.) *The priest knocks three times with a cross at the locked door, when it is opened, and he enters with the faithful.* The cross on which Christ died is, as it were, the key that opens for us the portals of heaven. The priest knocks three times, and this signifies the three years of Christ's public life, also the three hours that he hung on the cross, and the excruciating pains which he endured for our sins. Our first parents had no trouble to shut heaven against themselves and their posterity, but our dear Lord spent his whole life in suffering and persecution, and shed the last drop of his precious blood, in order to reopen it for us. Consider this and take to heart the words of Jesus: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away."—*Matt. 11: 12*. By an easy, indolent life you can never enter heaven.

3. *The procession returns into the church.*

(a.) This return into the church signifies the triumphal entry of Christ into heaven forty days after his Resurrection. Not he alone entered triumphantly into heaven, but all the just of the Old Law followed him, who up to that time had been in limbo, and who, as the faithful follow the priest into the church in the procession of to-day, followed their divine Saviour into heaven, as David says: "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive," (those that had been retained in limbo).—*Ps. 67: 19*.

(b.) The procession returning into the church, reminds us also of Christ's triumphal entry into heaven, after the last judgment. That will be the last and most solemn procession and triumphal train. The divine Saviour, surrounded by numberless Angels, as conqueror over sin, death, and hell, will go before; all the Saints of God will follow him in dazzling array, with brilliant, glittering crowns on their heads, and the palm of victory in their hands, and singing canticles of joy, they will enter into the mansions of the heavenly Jerusalem. Which of us would not wish to participate in such a procession? By now following Christ faithfully on the way of the cross, we will render ourselves worthy of following him in his triumphal entry into heaven.

## PART II.

The priest reads to-day the history of the Passion according to St. Matthew's account. We will consider—

1. *Why the Passion is read to-day, and*
2. *What signification the ceremonies have.*

1 One might think it premature to read the Passion now, for our Saviour did not commence his Passion to-day, but on Holy Thursday. To-day is a day of jubilee for Christ, for on this day he held his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. How then does it come that the Passion is read to-day? The Church has an important reason for it. She intends to place the fickleness of the Jewish people vividly before our eyes. These people, full of enthusiasm, do homage to Christ to-day, but after a few days they will clamor for his death. The Church knows this fickleness; for that reason the procession, which symbolizes his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, is followed by the reading of the history of the Passion, as if she would say: Behold, how fickle and inconstant are the Jews! To-day they shout to him hosannas and with loud acclamations of joy receive him into their city, and after five days they prefer the murderer Barabbas to him and nail him to the cross.

Oh, that we may not resemble these fickle Jews! Oh, that especially in this Easter time, when we again receive the holy Sacraments of Penance and of the Blessed Eucharist, there may be no one among us who, after his Easter confession and communion, returns again to his sinful life! Take to heart the word of the Prince of the Apostles: "For if, having fled from the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, being again entangled in them, they are overcome, their latter state is become unto them worse than the former, for it had been better for them not to

have known the way of justice, than, after they have known it, to turn back from the holy commandment, which was delivered to them."—*II. Pet. 2: 20, 21*. Let us make to-day when the Passion is read the firm resolution that, in this holy time of Easter, we will devote great attention to the worthy reception of the holy Sacraments, and perseveringly walk on the way of penance.

2: *There are several ceremonies at the reading of the Passion.*

(a.) Before the priest begins to read the Passion, *all the lights on the altar are extinguished*. This is done to indicate the extinction of the light of the world, in the death of Christ. When you see the lights on the altar extinguished, think of the death of Jesus and ask him to grant you the grace of making a holy and happy end.

(b.) The priest does not go, as he usually does, into the middle of the altar before reading the Gospel, *to implore the blessing and grace of God, that he may worthily and suitably announce the word of God*, but he begins at once to read the Passion, to signify that with Christ, whom we have lost by his death on the cross, all blessing and salvation is taken away from us; Christ being the source of all graces, if we have him no more, like the branches separated from the vine, we can produce no fruit, that is, do nothing meritorious for life everlasting. Consider this, and be solicitous not to lose Jesus by a mortal sin, or, if you have lost him, to seek and find him again without delay by true repentance.

(c.) Before the reading of the Passion the priest does not say: "*Dominus vobiscum*," "The Lord be with you." He omits this salutation, because he remembers that Judas saluted his Master: "Hail, Master," and betrayed him with a kiss. He thinks at the same time of those Christians who, in the state of sin, approach the table of the Lord and commit an incomparably greater treason than Judas, because they not only kiss him, but compel him to enter into their unclean hearts. Oh, that none of us may burden his conscience with this horrible treason and sacrilege!

(d.) When the priest comes to the passage that mentions the death of Christ, he kneels down, bows his head, and adores him who, in his infinite love, vouchsafed to die for us on the cross. Adore your crucified love with the priest.

(e.) When the priest has finished the reading of the Passion, the clerk does not say, as at the end of the Gospel: "*Laus tibi, Christe*," "Praise be to thee, O Christ." He keeps silence on account of the scoffs and blasphemies which the Jews poured upon our divine Redeemer during his Passion and death. Think of this contumely, and

keep away from the enemies and scoffers of our holy religion, for to scoff at religion and the Church is to scoff at Christ. If you are abused, insulted, and scoffed, take Christ for your example, and preserve meekness and Christian patience. Consider yourselves happy when you are deemed worthy to suffer ignominy for the name of Christ.

#### PERORATION.

I have now explained to you the celebration of Palm Sunday. You know the meaning of the procession with the palms, and of the Passion, which the priest reads to-day. Let me exhort you, during this week, devoutly to meditate on the Passion and death of Christ, and to consider how affectionately he has loved you, and at what price he has ransomed your soul. Such a meditation can not fail to be a powerful incentive for you to thank your Redeemer, to love him, and henceforth to devote your life to him. How happy shall you be if now and for evermore you give yourselves without reserve to Jesus, your Lord and God. You will enjoy the sweetest peace here, and have the blessed hope that after this fleeting time you will reign with Christ in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

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#### PALM SUNDAY.

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## 5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

#### THE SINNER, A TETHERED ASS.

*"Go ye into the village that is over against you, and immediately you shall find an ass tied."—Matt. 21: 2.*

Christ sends two of his disciples into an adjacent village, probably Bethania, telling them that they should find an ass tied, and a colt with her; that they should loose them and bring them to him. The disciples found things as their Lord had told them; they loosed the ass and the colt, and brought them. As the gospel further mentions, Christ used this ass and her colt at his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, where he was received with the loud hosannas and acclamations of the people, and homage was given him as the Messiah and the Redeemer of the world in the sight of the whole city.

The Fathers of the Church and spiritual writers see in the ass tied, which the disciples loosed by the order of Christ, and brought



to him, a picture of the sinner, who is tied like the ass, and must be loosed from his sins by the disciples of Christ, that is, the priests, if he is to come to God and be saved. This picture shall be the subject of our meditation to-day. I therefore say: The sinner is a tethered ass. He is—

*I. An ass;*

*II. A tethered ass.*

#### PART I.

*The sinner is an ass.*

1. The ass everywhere is held to be a *dull, stupid animal*. If you want to say that a man is very dull and stupid, you compare him to that animal. Now, it is certain that there is no man duller and more stupid than the sinner. And why?

(a.) He certainly would be foolish who would exchange his property worth a million of dollars for a few broken pieces of glass, which are worth nothing. What does the sinner do? He barter the grace of God for a sin. What value has the grace of God? It is worth more than all the treasures of the world, for with all these treasures it can not be bought. It is, in a certain sense, worth as much as the precious blood of Christ, for he shed his blood in order to recover for us the grace which we had lost. Therefore, the Prince of the Apostles says: "You know that you were not redeemed with corruptible gold and silver, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ."—*I. Pet. 1: 18, 19*. And what is sin worth, for which one exchanges the grace of God, this precious treasure? Nothing, for the sinner gets nothing for it—nay, less than nothing; he gets shame, wretchedness, and punishment upon earth, or a fleeting pleasure, which vanishes like smoke, or a good which does not satisfy the heart and which we must leave behind at our death. Judge for yourselves, is the sinner not fitly compared to an ass?

(b.) He also is dull who, knowing that by eating of a certain food he will contract a painful sickness or expose himself to the danger even of death, yet does not deny himself that food. What does the sinner do? He sins, although he knows that sin will make him most miserable and sentence him to eternal death. To lose your soul and heaven, and to plunge headlong into eternal damnation, for the sake of the gratification of a beastly passion, is not this the height of folly? Is the sinner not as dull as an ass?

(c.) A certain man, as we read, once bequeathed one hundred dollars to the most stupid man that could be found. After his death his

heirs made inquiries for the most stupid man, in order to give him the legacy. After long searches and inquiries they found one who was made councilor by the people who shortly before had killed another councilor in the same place. To this new councilor they handed the legacy, saying: "The legacy of one hundred dollars belongs to you, for you certainly are the most stupid man, because you trust this rabble and allow yourself to be made councilor by them." If such a legacy were exposed at present, we should not be compelled to inquire long to whom it should be given; with a good conscience it could be given to any sinner, for every sinner knows and believes that his sinful life will bring him where already millions of sinners have come—into the abyss of hell,—and yet this does not deter him from sin. It is said that the ass goes on the ice but once; the second time he is suspicious, because he fears again to slip and to fall. But the sinner exposes himself again and again to those sinful occasions in which he has frequently fallen. Is not the sinner duller and more stupid than an ass?

2. The ass is a *lazy* animal. Labor and exertion, especially of long duration, are repugnant to him; to hasten on the road is not his business; and even to keep him going slowly, a driver must be continually behind him. The sinner too is lazy.

(a.) *He frequently omits the good altogether.* Many days pass without even a short morning and evening prayer; he seldom hears a sermon; he neglects to hear mass on Sundays and holidays; many a year passes without confession and communion; holy times and feasts come and go, he does not profit by them.

(b.) *Whatever he does, he does carelessly and only by halves.* How cold and distracted is his prayer! He assists at the divine service without devotion; he is inattentive during the sermon, or gives himself over to worldly and sinful thoughts; at the reception of the Sacraments he lacks all fervor and purpose to amend his life.

(c.) *What good works he does, he performs with disgust and more from compulsion than good will.* To this class belong young people especially who fulfil their religious duties merely because they are kept to it by authority of their parents. How many dress plainly, live temperately, abstain from frivolous enjoyments, because on account of poverty they can not do otherwise!

3. *The ass is a stubborn animal.* So too is the sinner.

(a.) *Towards God.* He has so many inspirations and interior motions to virtue, but he disregards them; so many means of grace and

opportunities of repentance and amendment offered to him, but he makes no use of them. An old man of sixty years had for years neglected to go to church and make his Easter duty; he led an unchristian life himself, and endeavored by spreading bad books to instil the spirit of unbelief and irreligion into others also. A mission was given in the place where he lived; even great sinners embraced the opportunity, made their peace with God and were converted, but he remained obstinate. The mission was scarcely over, when he was struck by apoplexy and lay unconscious for two days, and finally died without a sign of repentance. So stubborn can man be with God; but his end is terrible.

(b.) *Towards men.* How many sons and daughters grieve their parents by their stubbornness! How many Christians steel their hearts against the salutary admonitions of their pastors and superiors, and obstinately abide on their evil ways! With how many do even the punishments which God and men inflict on them, produce no effect. What animal could be so stubborn as many sinners are? Woe to them, for the word of the Apostle applies to them: "According to thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the just judgment of God."—*Rom. 2: 5.* Pharaoh in Egypt.

4. The ass has a coarse voice; his bray is so disagreeable that even the lion can not stand it, but takes to flight.

(a.) The voice of the sinner is ugly too. How horrid is the conversation, the songs and jests in which unchaste people indulge! How intolerable to the ear of a pious Christian are the curses and blasphemies into which a man, in his passion, breaks out against God and his creatures! And when proud, self-conceited men boast and trumpet out whatever is praiseworthy in them, and, like the Pharisee in the temple, take pride in their good works, and despise others,—are not all who hear them disgusted?

(b.) And not only the words of the sinner, but also *his works* are hateful to God and man. Are not wilful murder, sodomy, oppression of the poor, of widows and orphans, defrauding laborers of their wages, sins crying to heaven for vengeance? Are not all sins that are committed in secret, or come to the knowledge of the world, voices which are hateful to God and all good people, because they give scandal and cause much mischief in the world?

5. *The ass is an ungrateful animal.* He kicks and bites his own master, who feeds him daily; and he often throws his rider. How ungrateful too is the sinner.

(a.) *Towards God.* What use does he make of the gifts of nature? He uses them to the offense of God. The body and its senses and members must serve him for the gratification of his passions; the faculties of the soul, free-will, reason, memory, he abuses for the commission of countless sins; money and temporal goods he spends for pride, impurity, drunkenness, and other vices. Is not this ingratitude towards God? And how does the sinner act in regard to supernatural goods? Does he listen to the inspirations of grace? No, he shuts his ears to them. Does he attend to the good lessons and admonitions which he frequently receives? No, he disregards and spurns them. Does he avail himself of the Sacraments for his purification and sanctification? No, he receives them either unworthily or not at all. Is not this ingratitude towards God?

(b.) *Towards men.* How ungrateful are many children towards their parents! They hardly ever think of the many benefits which they have received from them; they treat them, especially in their old days, most uncharitably and rudely, and not unfrequently wish their death. How ungrateful are so many Christians towards their benefactors, and especially towards the pastors of their souls! Rudeness, calumny, mockery, criticism, and contempt are the thanks for all the benefits they receive from them. Is not this ingratitude towards men?

From what has been said it is evident that every sinner, if he will only acknowledge the truth, must say to himself: "I am like the ass."

## PART II.

*The sinner is a tethered ass.*

When our Lord sent two of his disciples to the neighboring village he told them that they would find an ass *tied* and her colt. The Gospel speaks of an ass that was tied.

The sinner is not only an ass, but an ass that is tied and has no liberty. What are the cords with which he is tied?

(a.) *Blindness.* Sin blinds man. St. Theophilus says: "Sin is a mist which darkens the eye of the spirit and veils the splendor of the sun; it obscures the soul and takes from her the faculty of receiving the rays of the heavenly light. There is no more wretched state than to live in sin, for he who lives in the state of sin has no peace with God, is incapable of doing anything meritorious for heaven, and is in imminent danger of being lost for ever. But the unfortunate sinner does not know his terrible state; he is like a blind man who walks on the brink of a precipice without having any knowledge of it. If his conscience awakes sometimes and opens his eyes, he strives by all

means to silence it, saying. "Others live no better than I, and yet hope for heaven. God is infinitely merciful, and has frequently shown mercy to sinners who had sinned more grievously than I. I am young and strong. There is time enough yet for penance." In such a way the sinner calms his uneasy mind, his blindness is the cord that keeps him tied so that he continues in his sinful life.

(b.) *Bad habits.* If one frequently relapses into a sin, a habit is formed which exercises so powerful an influence over him that he can break it either with great difficulty or not at all. Habit is a second nature. "If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots, you also may do well when you have learned evil."—*Jer.* 13: 23. He sometimes attempts to break the chains which hold him in sin, but in vain; the fetters are too strong for him to tear asunder. If God does not come to his rescue by an extraordinary grace, he will remain a slave to his evil habit, and perish. Hence St. Bernard says. "The repeated sin begets habit; the habit, necessity; the necessity, impossibility; and the impossibility leads to despair; and despair, to damnation."

(c.) *The occasion of sin.* He who is in the proximate occasion of sin and does not avoid it, will certainly sin, whence St. Augustine says. "To love the proximate occasion of sin and to fall into the old sin is one and the same thing." But it is no easy task to break free from such occasions, especially if they have been long frequented. How often do pastors, parents, and other Christians endeavor to break up a sinful acquaintance which exists between two single persons. The same may be said of drunkards and gamblers. No advice or persuasion can induce them to avoid the houses and associates where they have frequently sinned by drunkenness and gambling.

Our Lord ordered the two disciples to loose the ass and to bring her and the colt to him. This they did. They loosed the ass and brought her and her colt to him.

2 Who looses sinners who are tied with the bands of blindness, habit and the occasion of sin? The disciples of Christ, that is, the priests, to whom it is said: "Whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven."—*Matt.* 18: 18. In order to loose the bands of the sinner, they preach to him—

(a.) *The word of God.* This, indeed, is a very effectual means for the conversion of the sinner, for it opens his eyes, makes known to him his wretched condition, and moves him to the resolution to enter upon the way of penance. St. John Capistran preached upon a certain occasion on the sad consequences of the passion of gambling, and

on the vain fashions of women. After the sermon many gamblers brought their cards and dice, and many females their luxurious ornaments to the market-place, cast them into the fire, and burnt them. St. Anthony of Padua was one day preaching before more than twelve thousand people, among whom were great sinners, when they took the sermon so much to heart that sometimes nothing could be heard but weeping and sobbing, so that he was obliged to stop in his discourse. Some cried out: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Others struck their breasts, saying: "Woe is me! I have deserved hell!" Others raised their hands to heaven and protested: "No more, Jesus, no more will I sin!" Behold here what power the word of God has to loose the sinner from his bonds! For this purpose—

(b.) *They administer the Sacraments.* I have only two Sacraments in view, the Sacraments of Penance and of the Blessed Eucharist. If you are bound and tied down with a thousand ropes, and you make a contrite and sincere confession, you will be loosed; and if afterwards you go to communion, you come to Jesus, or rather Jesus comes to you, takes possession of your heart, and giving himself to you, he enriches you with all graces. For faith teaches us that the priests have power in the Sacrament of Penance to forgive all sins without exception, for it is said to them: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven."—*John* 20: 21. And again, faith teaches us that in the Sacrament of the Altar, Jesus Christ is really present as God and man under the appearances of bread and wine, and that he gives himself to us in holy communion for the nourishment of our souls. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life."—*John* 6: 55.

#### PERORATION.

I have now explained to you that the sinner resembles an ass, and indeed an ass that is tied, and who it is that can loose him. You do not wish to be in such a condition; if anybody should compare you to an ass, you would feel highly offended, and, perhaps, demand satisfaction. But if you wish to escape this charge, guard against being sinners. Employ the present Easter time for your conversion and the amendment of your life, that you may be able to say joyfully on Easter Sunday: "Our soul hath been delivered, as a sparrow out of the snare of the fowlers. The snare is broken, and we are delivered."—*Psa.* 123: 7. Amen.

## PALM SUNDAY.

## 6. MORAL SKETCH.

### THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EASTER COMMUNICANTS.

*"Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."—Matt. 21: 9.*

Our divine Saviour entered Jerusalem to-day in a kind of triumph, and was received with the loud hosannas and acclamations of the people. The good, simple-hearted people meet him with great joy. The Scribes and Pharisees meet him as enemies; their hearts being full of envy and hatred, they were indignant at his triumphal entry, and deliberated how to put him to death. How different was the manner in which Christ was received on his solemn entry into Jerusalem by those two classes!

It is now Easter time, and all Catholics are strictly bound to receive the Blessed Eucharist. Christ will come to us also in holy communion. But how different will be the reception which he receives from Christians at their Easter communion!

- I. Some will receive him as the simple-hearted people;*
- II. Others as the Scribes and Pharisees.*

#### PART I.

When the people heard that Christ was coming to Jerusalem they went forth to meet him, to manifest their reverence. So the good, simple-hearted Christians now in the Easter time go to meet their Saviour by a worthy preparation for holy communion. They take to heart the admonition of the Apostle. "Let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice."—*I. Cor. 11: 28*. Jesus, the purest and holiest, will dwell only in pure hearts; therefore, in the Following of Christ, he says to the Christian soul (*Book, iv. c. 12*): "I am the lover of purity and the giver of all holiness. I seek a pure heart, and there is the place of my rest. Make ready for me a large upper room furnished, and I will make the pasch with thee, together with my disciples. If thou wilt have me come to thee and remain with thee, purge out the old leaven and make clean the habitation of thy heart." The Emperor Frederick one day went out hunting, when a nobleman, meeting him, invited him to his castle. But seeing the room full of cobwebs, he left angrily, saying, "This room may be good enough for hounds, but not for an emperor." How shall Jesus, the King of heaven and earth, dwell in a soul defiled

with sin? To receive holy communion worthily, we must be free from every mortal sin. "Let none approach but his friends, no one who is avaricious, no one who is a usurer, no one who is unchaste."—*St Chrysostom*. Examine not only your present, but also your past life, and especially your former confessions, and see that everything was right, that you may render yourselves worthy of making a good confession and communion.

2 Some took branches of palm trees (*John* 12: 13), others cut down boughs from the trees, and went to meet Jesus.—*Mark* 11: 8, 9. With such branches of palm and olive trees, those who are anxious to receive Easter communion worthily must meet Jesus. They carry palm branches in their hands as a sign of the victory which they have won over the world, the flesh, and the devil. They carry olive branches to indicate that by a good confession they have cleansed their conscience from sin, reconciled themselves with God, and possess his peace. How are matters with you on this point? Are you resolved to quit bad habits, to avoid the proximate occasions of sin, and to eradicate inordinate inclinations and passions? Have you a true supernatural contrition for your sins? Are you really in earnest with the amendment of your life? Do you seriously reflect that only on these conditions you can worthily confess and communicate? It is also very important that before the reception of the Sacraments you labor with fervor at the amendment of your life. If you live in a sinful occasion, give it up; if you are infected with a bad habit, free yourselves; if you possess the goods of others, restore them; if you live at enmity with your neighbor, become reconciled to him; in a word, set the affairs of your conscience in order, that, transformed and renewed in heart, you may go worthily to confession and communion.

3. "*And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way.*"—*Matt.* 21: 8. All Christians that are solicitous for making a worthy confession do this in a moral sense. They put off the garment of pride, covetousness, lust, anger, envy, gluttony, and sloth, and put on the garment of humility, liberality, chastity, meekness, temperance in eating and drinking, brotherly love, and diligence, according to the admonition of the Apostle: "Put off the old man, who is corrupted according to the desires of error; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind. And put on the new man, who, according to God, is created in justice and holiness of truth."—*Eph.* 4: 22-24. A worthy communion requires that you renew your mind and conduct, and become conformable to Christ interiorly and exteriorly. The soul must die to the creature and live to the Creator; you must remove out of the heart what is not of God and for God. "Although a soul is in the state of grace, but if captivated by earthly inclinations, the love of God



finds the less room in the heart, the more it is governed by earthly desires."—*St. Alphonsus*.

When the multitudes saw Jesus coming, and while accompanying him on his solemn entry into Jerusalem, they exclaimed: "*Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*" Pious Christians always receive holy communion with reverence and devotion. They adore Jesus with heart and mouth, praise and glorify him, humble themselves most profoundly before him, return him thanks, vow obedience, love, and fidelity to him, and ask him with confidence for grace. You must do the same, if you wish holy communion to bring you grace and life everlasting. The greater the devotion with which you go to communion, the greater will be the fruit you reap and the greater the graces you will receive.

## PART II

The Scribes and Pharisees had also come to the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem, but it was not from reverence, loyalty, or love for him, but from temporal respects. Ah! how many Christians are like them, and go to holy communion only out of human respect, because they fear the people.—*Luke 20: 19*. They think: Now it is Easter time, the Church strictly requires every one to go to communion; I will get into some trouble if I omit it. People will think me an unbeliever or a bad Christian; it might injure my business or trade. Can it be expected that such Christians will receive communion worthily? I doubt it very much; for, as their aim is only the external compliance with the precept of the Church, they will take little pains to make a good confession; they will not even think of renouncing their worldly and sinful life and of serving God with fervor; they will approach the table of the Lord without the proper preparation, and, consequently, unworthily. How many in this Easter time will go to communion in such a manner! Are there not some among us who will go more from compulsion than from devotion?

2. Some of the Pharisees were angry when they heard the loud hosannas of the people, and even demanded of Christ to rebuke them, saying: "Master, rebuke thy disciples."—*Luke 19: 39*. It is also a stumbling-block in the eyes of some Christians to be obliged to see how others of the faithful love to pray, go to church frequently, choose to be with Jesus in the most holy Sacrament rather than to participate in worldly joys and pleasures, and frequently go to communion. Such pious people are in their eyes people without culture and manners, who do not keep up with the times, but are a century behind the age. Now, if such Christians submit to the precept of confession and communion at Easter, will they do it worthily? They may, but who will ven-

ture to affirm it? If, for the worthy reception of the Sacraments, no humility, no repentance, no Christian sentiment or feeling were required, then we might believe that they receive them worthily; but, as these virtues are absolutely necessary for the worthy reception of the holy Sacraments, what else can be expected than that by their confession and communion they will load their conscience with a double sacrilege?

3. The Scribes and Pharisees accompanied Christ at his solemn entry into Jerusalem, not as his friends, but as *his enemies*, for they had already sought to kill him.—*John 11: 53* Christians who, after a bad confession, approach the table of the Lord, resemble them. Receiving unworthily, they sin against the body and the blood of the Lord, crucifying him anew. "Whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord," (*I Cor. 11: 27*), that is, he is as guilty as if he had killed the Lord and shed his blood. For every grievous sin is, as the Apostle says, a crucifixion of Christ, because it could be satisfied for only by the crucifixion of Christ; this is so much the more true of the unworthy communion, which is the most sacrilegious abuse of the most holy thing we possess. Therefore the Apostle declares that the unworthy communicant eats and drinks judgment and eternal damnation to himself: "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord."—*I Cor. 11: 29*. Among the Athenians it was a custom that he who was condemned to death was compelled to take into his mouth and swallow a piece of paper on which the sentence of death was written. By this it was indicated to the condemned that the sentence of death was irrevocable and that there was no hope for pardon. In like manner, those who receive unworthily, eat the sentence of their damnation, and transform, as it were, this sentence into flesh and blood, and imprint the seal of condemnation on their souls.

A great number of Christians during Easter time will burden their conscience with this great and fatal crime of an unworthy and sacrilegious communion. How many will confess without true contrition! They are not in the least sorry for having offended God, their most rigorous Judge and best Father; they do not change their perverse mind, and are attached to the object of their sin after confession as before. They receive communion unworthily, because their confession was invalid for the want of contrition. How many will confess without a firm purpose of amendment! They are not resolved to quit their cursing and blaspheming, their shameless conversation and obscenities, their night-walking, drinking and gambling and sinful company, to give up their enmities, to restore ill-gotten goods, and to repair the injury they have caused by their sins. They receive communion

unworthily, because they are destitute of the resolution of amending their lives. How many will conceal grievous sins in their confessions, purposely diminish the number of their sins, or palliate them in such a manner that they appear only as small faults. They receive unworthily, because their confession is not sincere.

#### PERORATION.

Take to heart what I have said, and guard against an unworthy communion. Do not renew the crime of the Jews, and do not crucify Jesus anew. Endeavor to make a good confession, for this is the most necessary preparation for a worthy communion. Whoever upon examining his conscience feels that his former confessions are invalid, must tell his confessor at Easter, that they may be rectified. If you have by a good confession cleansed your conscience from all sins, approach the table of the Lord with a living faith, profound humility, and the greatest reverence and devotion, that you may receive worthily, and that the word of Jesus may be verified in you: "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life."—*John 6: 55.*

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#### PALM SUNDAY.

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### 7. MORAL SKETCH.

HOW WE ARE TO RECEIVE JESUS IN THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

*"Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."—Matt. 21: 9.*

For the last time Christ enters Jerusalem, and homage is paid to him as Redeemer of the world in the sight of all the city. As he approaches the city, riding on the colt of an ass, there is a joyous commotion, and from all sides the people stream out to meet him, and full of enthusiasm, cry out: "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

In remembrance of this solemn entry of the Lord into Jerusalem, the Church every year on this day makes a solemn procession with palm branches, and offers to her Lord and Redeemer the sacrifice of adoration with a joyful heart. By this procession she reminds us also of the merciful entry which he makes into our hearts in these days. The holy Easter time is now at hand in which we, in compliance with

the precept of the Church, must receive the most holy Eucharist. He who on this day solemnly entered into Jerusalem, will come to us in this Sacrament, and unite himself most intimately with us and make us partakers of all the treasures of his love. The question is: How must we receive him, that his entry into our heart may bring us salvation? With the answer to this question we will occupy ourselves to-day. We must receive him with a heart—

- I. Cleansed from sins; and*
- II. Adorned with virtues.*

#### PART I.

In order worthily to receive Jesus in holy communion, we must have a heart that is cleansed from all evil, a heart—

1. *That is free at least from every mortal sin.* As our faith teaches us, Christ comes to us when we receive holy communion, with his Divinity and humanity; he who is holiness itself, whom the Angels and Saints adore with trembling veneration. How pure and spotless must be the heart which is to serve as a dwelling-place to so great a guest! David wished to build a temple to the Lord, but the word of God came to him: "Thou hast shed much blood, and fought many battles, so thou canst not build a house to my name."—*I. Paralip. 22: 8, 9* If David, who had shed blood only in lawful wars, was not clean enough to build a temple to the Lord, how should a Christian dare to receive his Lord and God into his heart defiled with mortal sins? This would be a greater sin and crime than that committed by his murderers. "Whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord," (*I. Cor. 11: 27*), that is, is as guilty as if he should crucify Jesus and shed his blood. Again the Apostle says: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself."—*I. Cor. 11: 29*. Holy communion, this heavenly medicine which brings grace and life to the just, is changed in the hearts of sinners into the most injurious poison, and causes death and perdition. St. Augustine says: The Sacrament is one thing, and the virtue of the Sacrament another. Many take from the altar and die, and they die because they take. Therefore the Apostle says: He eateth and drinketh judgment to himself. For the morsel which Christ gave to Judas was no poison, but after he had taken it, the enemy entered into him, not because he had taken something bad, but because he received the good unworthily.

Examples: St. Cyprian relates of a woman who, having concealed a mortal sin in confession, ventured to approach the table of the Lord. She had no sooner received the sacred Host on her tongue, than she was

seized with terrible spasms and convulsions and died immediately. In the year 1833, in Cochin China, a young man went to confession, but concealed a mortal sin, and afterwards went to communion. The punishment followed immediately. He became a raving maniac, ran out of the church, and cried out: "I am Judas! I have betrayed Jesus!" They exhorted him to do penance, but he continued to cry out: "I am Judas! I have betrayed Jesus!" So he lived and died; he had eaten to himself judgment at the moment he received communion with an unclean heart.

God sometimes makes such terrible examples, says St. Cyprian, in order to make us cautious and to deter us from an unworthy communion. Let no one whose heart is contaminated with grievous sins dare to come to the table of the Lord.

2. *In which there is no voluntary inclination to evil.* The evil inclinations, as long as they are involuntary, must not keep us away from holy communion, on the contrary, they should encourage us, because communion is a powerful means of weakening the evil inclinations and of strengthening us in virtue. "He who frequently and devoutly receives this heavenly nourishment, receives such a power and strength that the deadly poison of evil inclinations loses its strength and by no means can bring death to the soul"—*St. Francis of Sales*. By the evil inclinations which must be banished from the soul we understand the delight in sin, which one entertains in his heart and nourishes as an object of affection, although he does not in reality commit the sin. For example, you no longer commit a sin of impurity in action, but you are fond of seeing the person with whom you formerly enjoyed a sinful familiarity; you seek her company, think of her often with pleasure, and presents from her are dear tokens to you. You have lived at enmity with your neighbor and offended him with words and actions. You injure him now no more, but you can not look at him with friendly eyes, you avoid him, and can not but with aversion think and speak of him. You have oftentimes spoken ill of others and been guilty of many detractions, slanders, and calumnies. You avoid them now, but it gives you pleasure to hear slanderous words of those of whom you have formerly spoken ill.

These are voluntary inclinations to sin, from which you must necessarily cleanse your hearts, that you may not receive communion unworthily. God is a jealous God; you must remove out of your heart everything that displeases his holiness.

3. *Which is free from venial sins as much as possible.* Although a venial sin is something insignificant in the eyes of men, it is not so in the eyes of God; the smallest fault is to him a greater offense than is the greatest insult that is offered to us. Therefore the Saints

were very scrupulous about venial sins, and dared not to go to communion when they were conscious of the least fault. St. Chrysostom became once somewhat angry at two persons who misbehaved, and on account of this small fault, if fault it was, he dared not go to communion. St. Ambrose forbade two of his deacons, on account of a few idle words, to go to communion until they had done severe penance. We must, however, distinguish between voluntary and involuntary venial sins. To voluntary venial sins belong those for which one has an attachment, which he is not earnestly resolved to sever, which lead him to commit the sin on every occasion and even with deliberation. These wholly voluntary venial sins displease the divine Saviour very much, and prevent him from giving us his grace abundantly. He who wishes to receive communion with fruit and benefit, must be careful not to commit a venial sin voluntarily. Concerning involuntary venial sins, that is, those which are committed from human weakness, inadvertence, or surprise, they are not an obstacle to communion, but, nevertheless, we must profoundly humble ourselves on account of them, be sorry for them, and with the help of God's grace endeavor to avoid them for the future.

## PART II.

In order to receive communion worthily and with fruit, our hearts must be adorned with virtues; these virtues are—

1. *Faith.* The Fathers of the Church call the most holy Sacrament of the Altar the *mystery of faith*; and so it is. We see nothing in this Sacrament but a little white host, which, as every one knows, is prepared from flour and water. And this host, which looks and tastes like bread, which remains immovable wherever you lay it, which can be broken and destroyed, is, as soon as it is consecrated by the priest, Jesus Christ, the God-Man, who once walked on earth, and is now in heaven at the right hand of his Father, and will come again at the end of the world to judge the living and the dead. He assures us of this most emphatically, saying: "Take ye and eat, this is my body." We are and have been taught this by the holy Catholic Church, for the last eighteen hundred years. Our senses may show us only bread in holy communion, but we must not doubt a moment that this bread is no bread, but God made man, and we must believe this with a stronger faith than if we should see him present before us, for our eyes could sooner deceive us than could our holy faith. When St. Thomas of Aquin felt his end approach, he urgently asked for the holy Sacraments. In order to receive the holy Viaticum, he wished to be laid upon ashes, and upon this couch of humility he made an act of faith in the Real Presence of Jesus in the most holy Sacrament,

praying: "I firmly believe that Jesus Christ is present, true God and true man, in this sublime Sacrament. I adore thee, O my God and Saviour, I receive thee, who art the price of my redemption and the viaticum of my pilgrimage."

Make, as often as you go to holy communion, an act of faith in the Real Presence of Jesus in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar, saying with Peter: "Thou art the Son of the living God." If you are animated with such a living faith, you will, with the centurion in the Gospel, most profoundly humble yourself, and with reverence say:

Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

2. *Hope.* He who firmly believes that Jesus Christ is truly present in the Blessed Eucharist, places all his hope in him, and expects from him all good things. Faith tells us that Christ is present, who in his earthly life, gave numberless proofs of his love to men, who fed the hungry, healed the sick, raised the dead, showed mercy to sinners, and shed his blood for us all on the cross, that Christ who now, in heaven at the right hand of his Father, is our mediator and advocate, and who does everything for us in order to save us, that Christ, who, to-day as well as eighteen hundred years ago, invites us all to come to him. "Come to me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you."—*Matt. 11: 28.* Who would not go to the table of the Lord with great confidence? If we are only free from mortal sin, if we only detest all sins from the bottom of our heart, and are sincere, we may hope from him every blessing. He has his hands full of graces and is ready to give to every one as much as he desires.

When about to go to holy communion, excite yourselves to great confidence in Jesus, and pray: "O my Jesus, I am a great sinner, and am not worthy to untie the latchet of thy shoes, much less to receive thee into my heart, but thy goodness and mercy give me courage and make me hope with confidence for every blessing from thee. O Jesus, thou canst and wilt give me everything that is necessary and salutary to me; let thy omnipotence make me what I must become, that I may die to the world and live to thee alone."

3. *Charity.* This is the most necessary and most pleasing virtue that could adorn our heart in holy communion. It was a great, nay, an incomprehensible love that Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God, would become man and walk upon earth for thirty-three years in the form of a servant, but still greater and more incomprehensible must his love appear when we contemplate him in the Blessed Eucharist. Whilst sojourning on earth, he concealed only his Divinity; he appeared as man, but here he veils even his humanity, and shows himself to us only in the form of a little wafer of bread. After his Incarnation he re-

mained thirty-three years upon earth and then returned to his heavenly Father; but in the most holy Eucharist he will remain till the end of time, so that it is literally true: "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."—*Matt. 28: 20.* While on earth he did good to all and bestowed great benefits on men, he even died for them on the cross, but here he goes still further, he gives himself to us and gives us everything he has. Oh! who can comprehend this love? How enraptured were the Saints when they contemplated this love of Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist! When St Philip Neri saw the priest who brought him the holy Viaticum, he exclaimed: "Behold my love, behold my love! Oh, give me my love!"

Before you approach the table of the Lord, consider for a few moments the infinite love which Jesus exhibits to us in the Blessed Eucharist, and ponder on these questions *Who is coming? To whom does he come? How does he come? Why does he come?* If you reflect on these questions, the fire of charity will be enkindled in your hearts for him who out of love for you has humbled himself to the form of bread, and who unites himself most intimately with you, in order to make you participate in his divine nature.

#### PERORATION.

I conclude this instruction with the earnest wish that in this holy Easter time you may all receive holy communion worthily. Cleanse your heart from every mortal sin. Oh, that there may be none among you who will dare receive holy communion in the state of mortal sin! Cleanse your heart as much as possible from venial sins. The means by which you can do it is confession. Use all possible diligence to make a good confession, that you may worthily receive holy communion. Before communion make acts of faith, hope, and charity, or the love of God, for these three virtues are to Jesus the most acceptable ornaments of your souls. After such a preparation approach the table of the Lord with confidence, and you will obtain grace and life everlasting. Amen.



## EASTER SUNDAY

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**EPISTLE.** (*1. Cor. 4 7. 8.*) Brethren Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new paste, as you are unleavened. For Christ, our pasch, is sacrificed. Therefore, let us feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

## 1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

## HOW AND WHY WE ARE TO KEEP EASTER.

The Apostles had a great desire to keep the pasch with Christ, their divine Master. They therefore came to him, saying: "Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the pasch." — *Matt. 26: 17* And Christ having appointed the place, they joyfully went and prepared the pasch and ate it with him. It always has been so. From the very beginning of Christianity Easter has been for all faithful disciples of the Lord, for all good Christians, the most beautiful and joyous time, and to keep Easter was a necessity of their hearts. Therefore the Apostle says in the epistle of this day: "*Let us feast.*" And as it is not enough merely to keep Easter, but all depends on our keeping it in the right way, the Apostle tells us how we are to keep it.

Let us meditate on the contents of the epistle for this day, and answer the two following questions:

*I. Why are we to keep Easter?*

*II. How are we to keep Easter?*

## PART I.

We keep Easter on account of Christ, who, as the Apostle says in the epistle, was immolated as our pasch.

1. The pasch which the Jews celebrated in the Old Law referred to our pasch.

(a.) You know that God inflicted great plagues upon Pharaoh and all Egypt, to compel him to let the Israelites go out of the country. The last of these plagues was that all the first-born males of men and beasts were killed in one night by the angel of God. But the Israelites, who, at the command of God, killed a lamb, and with its blood sprinkled the lintels and door-posts of their houses, were spared from this terrible calamity; the angel, seeing the posts and lintels sprinkled

with the blood of the lamb, passed by their houses. The lamb was to be broiled and eaten by the Jews, and on account of their speedy departure, in a standing posture, with their shoes on their feet, their loins girt, and a staff in their hands. In memory of these events, they were obliged to celebrate the pasch every year in the same way as they had celebrated it immediately before their departure from Egypt. The feast of the pasch began on the fourteenth day of the month Nisan, which corresponds to the second half of the month of March and the first half of April, and lasted seven days.

2. Our Christian Easter was prefigured by the Jewish pasch, for, as the Jews celebrated their pasch in remembrance of their deliverance out of the servitude of Egypt, so we celebrate our Easter in memory of our liberation from the slavery of sin and Satan; for Easter is the time in which Christ accomplished the work of our Redemption. The principal part of the celebration of the Jewish pasch consisted in this, that every family was obliged to kill and eat a lamb. This paschal lamb was a type of our Easter Lamb, Jesus Christ, who has been immolated for us. The paschal lamb of the Jews was to be *without blemish*; Jesus Christ is without spot or sin, "for it was fitting that we should have such a high-priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."—*Heb. 7: 26*. The lamb was to be *slaughtered*; Christ was slaughtered on the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Not a bone of the lamb should be broken; not a bone of the crucified Saviour was broken, as was usually done with those who were crucified. The blood of the lamb with which the Israelites sprinkled the door-posts, caused the angel not to enter their houses, but *to pass by, sparing them*; so the blood of Christ is the *price of our Redemption and of our rescue from eternal death*. The Jews were *to eat* the slaughtered and broiled lamb; we also receive Christ, the Lamb immolated on the cross, in holy communion. The uncircumcised and strangers were not allowed to participate in eating the paschal lamb, but only the Jews, and of them only those *who were legally clean*; so also only the faithful *who are free from every grievous sin are allowed* to approach the table of the Lord.

3 The Easter which we keep every year refers to our Paschal Lamb, Christ, who was immolated.

(a.) Easter is the time in which Christ, the Lamb of God, *offered himself for us on the cross*. Could we let this time pass by without calling to mind this great sacrifice of our Redemption, and without thanking our Redeemer for the superabundant love with which he went for us unto sufferings and death? What kind of Christians must we be if we do not celebrate this sacrifice of love every year at least with a grateful remembrance?

(b.) Easter is the time of *his glorious Resurrection*. Our dear Lord had appeared upon earth in the greatest poverty and lowliness; his whole life here below was nothing but an unbroken chain of tribulations, persecutions, and sufferings; and at last he died the most ignominious and painful death on the cross. But how was everything changed after his Resurrection: his humiliation was transformed into exaltation, his contumely into glory; his suffering into heavenly beatitude; and his death into life everlasting. . Because "he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, God also hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above every name: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and in hell. And that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father,"—*Phil. 2. 9-11.*

(c.) Easter is the time in which the divine Lord accomplished the work of our Redemption. If the Jews celebrated their pasch every year in grateful remembrance of their deliverance from their slavery in Egypt, how much more reason have we for the celebration of our Easter, since Jesus Christ freed us from the worst kind of slavery that can be imagined, from the slavery of sin and Satan, blotted out our guilt, reconciled us with our Creator, and made us children of God and heirs of heaven. How could we, if we contemplate only superficially the unspeakable grace of our Redemption, allow Easter to pass by without celebrating it with an equally thankful and joyous heart?

(d.) Easter, finally, is the time in which we are reminded of our own resurrection. "By a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead; and as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive."—*I Cor. 15: 21, 22.* Christ merited the grace for us, that we shall once, like him, come forth from the grave with glorified bodies, and with body and soul enjoy the everlasting felicity of heaven.

## PART II.

The Apostle tells us in the lesson of this Sunday *how we are to keep Easter*, exhorting us to purge out the old leaven, that we may become a new mass, adding, by way of explanation: "*Therefore, let us feast not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*"

1 The first thing that we are obliged to do in this holy Easter time is to *purge out the old leaven, the leaven of malice and wickedness.*

(a.) The *old leaven* that is to be purged out, is *sin*. Sin is justly designated as a leaven, for as leaven penetrates and ferments a whole

mass of flour, so sin penetrates the whole man and corrupts all the powers of soul and body. It corrupts the understanding by darkening it; the memory and the faculty of imagination by filling it with impure representations; the will by weakening it, and inclining it to evil. It corrupts the body with its senses by abusing it as an instrument for evil, and bringing upon it countless evils, sickness, pain, and finally death. It is sin that destroys all supernatural merits; for he that commits a mortal sin, immediately loses all merits for heaven which he had acquired, and can do nothing meritorious for eternal life as long as he continues in sin.

(b.) The Apostle designates the leaven as a *leaven of malice and wickedness*. There is always a great *malice* in sin, for it is a rebellion against God, the Lord of heaven and earth, a base ingratitude towards him, our best Father and greatest benefactor, and particularly an execrable infidelity towards Jesus, our most affectionate Redeemer. There is also *wickedness* in sin, for he who allows himself to be governed by it, deceives himself and others; himself, because he forms for himself a false conscience and tries to excuse his sinful life by various groundless reasons; and others, because he presents the good side, and frequently under the appearance of rectitude injures them in their temporal and eternal goods.

(c.) The Apostle, in saying that we should purge out the leaven of malice and wickedness, refers, by this expression, to the Jewish pasch. The Jews were not allowed, during the seven days of the duration of their pasch, to eat anything leavened. The transgression of this law was punished with death. "Seven days there shall not be found any leaven in your houses; he that shall eat leavened bread, his soul shall perish out of the assembly of Israel."—*Ex. 12: 19*. Before the beginning of the pasch the Jews were obliged to remove all leavened bread, and to search carefully to see that there was nothing with leaven in it, and to sweep and purge, as it were, the whole house, that nothing leavened might remain. In like manner, according to the admonition of the Apostle, we remove out of our hearts everything that is sinful, so that they become clean, like a vessel that is cleaned with all diligence. And by what means is this accomplished? That which the Church offers us in the holy Easter time, nay, imposes upon as a duty, the *Sacrament of Penance*. If we receive this Sacrament worthily, we shall be cleansed from all stains, according to the word of Christ: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven." There is leaven in the hearts of all. Some are infected with grievous sins. Easter, perhaps, has come and gone frequently, and yet they have not purged out the leaven of sin. They have made either no confession, or an un-

worthy one. Oh, that they would avail themselves of the present Easter time for a contrite and sincere confession, in order to purge the leaven of malice and wickedness out of their hearts! Others have, if not mortal, at least venial sins upon their conscience, they also must endeavor by a good confession to cleanse themselves from all faults and sins.

2. The second thing that must be done is that we become a new mass, and keep Easter with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

(a.) By the leavened bread the Apostle understands an immoral life. But purity of morals does not consist only in being free from every sin, mortal and venial, and from every voluntary inclination to sin, but also in practicing the virtues opposite to sin. When Christ calls the clean of heart blessed, those are to be understood who, on the one hand, detest from their heart and avoid every sin, and on the other hand, love and practice everything that pleases God. Purity of morals, therefore, is nothing else than Christian justice, which consists in avoiding evil and doing good. He who does no evil, but omits the good which he could and should do, does not belong to the servants of God, who have a claim to eternal beatitude; to him, on the contrary, these words apply: "Every tree that yieldeth not good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire."—*Matt. 3: 10.* "To him who knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."—*James 4: 17.*

(b.) By the unleavened bread the Apostle understands *true justice* which stands not only before men, but also before God. Above all, the heart must be good, for if everything is not right in the heart, it is only exterior justice, mere show and delusion. The Scribes and Pharisees knew how to give their justice so captivating an appearance that they were held as saints by the people, and yet Christ declares: "Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—*Matt. 5: 20.* The Scribes and Pharisees were just exteriorly and before the eyes of the world, but their hearts were full of malice; such passions as ambition and pride, envy and desire of revenge, hatred and enmity, impurity and adultery, were harbored there. For this reason he compares them to whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness.—*Matt. 23: 27.* It would be a fatal self-delusion to content yourselves with a so-called worldly honesty, without troubling yourselves about interior justice, outward justice and honesty, without the interior, is nothing but sanctimoniousness and hypocrisy. True justice, pleasing to God, requires all our

actions and good works to be referred to God, and that in all things and everywhere we seek the honor and glory of God. The greatest actions and most heroic virtues when they have their foundation in ambition and pride, are worthless before God and without fruit and merit for heaven. Hence the admonition of Christ: "Take heed that you do not your justice before men, that you may be seen by them, otherwise you shall not have a reward from your Father who is in heaven."—*Matt. 6: 1.*

## PERORATION.

Let us then feast, not with the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. The most important business for you at Easter must be to make a good confession, that you may cleanse yourselves from all your sins, obtain God's grace and love, and enable yourselves worthily to receive holy communion. After that, persevere steadfastly in the service of God, that you may preserve the grace obtained, and may one day be deemed worthy to celebrate Easter in heaven. Amen.

## EASTER SUNDAY.

GOSPEL. (*Mark 16: 1-7.*) At that time: Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought sweet spices, that coming, they might anoint Jesus. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen. And they said one to another: Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And looking, they saw the stone rolled back: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed with a white robe, and they were astonished. Who saith to them: Be not affrighted, ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: he is risen, he is not here, behold the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee, there you shall see him, as he told you.

## 2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

## THE APPARITION OF AN ANGEL TO THE WOMEN WHO VISIT THE SEPULCHRE OF THE LORD.

Our Lord frequently foretold, both to his friends and his enemies, that he would rise from the dead on the third day. "From that time forth Jesus began to show to his disciples, that he must go to Jeru-

saalem; and suffer many things from the ancients and the Scribes and the chief priests, and be put to death, and the third day rise again."—*Matt.* 16: 21. "As Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights, so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights."—*Matt.* 13: 40. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."—*John* 2: 19. That Christ spoke the truth this day proves. His holy body had been taken down from the cross on Friday evening and laid in the sepulchre; the Jews had sealed the grave and for greater security placed guards around it, so that no one could steal the body and say that Jesus had risen from the dead. The morning of Easter Sunday had not yet dawned, when Christ came forth from the sealed grave. The soldiers who guarded the sepulchre were the first witnesses of his glorious Resurrection.

The gospel of this day speaks of this so important and joyful mystery of our faith, which treats—

- I. *Of the visit to the sepulchre by the women,*
- II. *Of the apparition of an angel.*

#### PART I.

1. The Gospel relates that *Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought sweet spices, that coming, they might anoint Jesus*.

(a.) Let us first consider the women who are mentioned in this record. Mary Magdalen was once a great sinner, but bewailing her sins at the feet of Christ with tears of true contrition, she obtained the forgiveness of them.—*Luke* 7: 37, etc. After her conversion she was filled with love and gratitude towards Christ, zealously listened to his instructions, stood with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with John, under the cross on Calvary, and was the first whom the risen Saviour favored with his appearance. What a comforting example is Mary Magdalen for penitent Christians of all times. Though they may have frequently and grievously sinned, yet if they truly repent, Jesus loves them as much—nay, even more than those souls who have not sinned much, but are not particularly zealous in his service. Mary, the mother of James the Less and the wife of Cleophas, was a cousin of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and a faithful companion of Christ, and her son James was one of his Apostles. Mary Salome, the wife of Zebedee and mother of the two Apostles, James the Elder and John, also adhered to Christ with all fidelity.—*Matt.* 27: 56. According to St. Luke (24: 10) Joanna, the wife of Chusa, the steward of King Herod, greatly supported Christ in his poverty, and was with the three women here mentioned. There were others present also, whose names are not mentioned.

All these women were followers of Jesus, contributed to his support with their substance according to their ability, adhered to him with an affectionate love, and did not forsake him even on his way to death. They showed themselves more zealous, more faithful, and more persevering than the Apostles and other adherents of Christ, who abandoned him in his Passion and death for fear of the Jews, and dared not to show themselves publicly, much less visit the sepulchre. It is so to-day. There is more devotion, more piety, and more Christian zeal and sentiment among women than among men. Thus the women, by their good example, religious sentiment, and especially by the religious training of their children, are called upon to repair the injury which Eve, the first woman, caused in the world. Oh, that all women would comply with their vocation with zeal and perseverance!

(b.) It is said that these women bought spices, that they might anoint the body of Jesus.

With the exception of Mary Magdalen, all these women were poor: they belonged to the common state, and were obliged to earn their bread by the work of their hands. Still, they bought spices with their savings, in order to do an act of charity to the dear Saviour and to anoint his body. What a noble, generous love! Let us imitate these women by cheerfully contributing towards the adorning of the house of God and the relief of the poor, especially of such as are sick.

They bought spices, not for themselves, but for Christ, that they might anoint his holy body. How many are there who expend great sums of money for their corruptible body, for furniture, clothes, and pleasure, but who hardly ever give anything for the honor of God, the good of religion, and for pious purposes, or who, perhaps, with Judas, say: "Why this waste?"—*Matt. 26: 8.*

2 " *They came very early in the morning, the first day of the week, to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen.*"

(a.) The first day of the week was Easter Sunday. Why did the women not go on Saturday to the grave, but on Sunday, since their love for him suffered not a moment's delay, that they might anoint his body? From conscientiousness in the observance of the precept of the Sabbath, when the Jews were not allowed to make a long journey, or do the least servile work. This should be a lesson to us to abstain from all servile works on Sundays and holidays, to keep all the commandments of God conscientiously, and to omit even good works which are not commanded, if we can not perform them without violation of the duties of our state or religion. True, genuine piety requires that we do the good which is commanded, and then that which



is recommended and voluntary; that we fulfil first the duties of justice, and after that the duties of charity. Alas! many invert the order established by God.

(b.) The women must have started very early on their way, for they were at the sepulchre at sunrise. This is an admonition for you to rise early on Sundays and holidays, and to do your work, as far as that can not be delayed, that you may not come to church too late through your own fault. Love for Jesus, and reverence for him as well as zeal to pay him your homage, must urge you to hasten, that you may come to the divine service too early rather than too late. In a spiritual sense the example of the women teaches us that we should dedicate the first part of our life, our childhood and youth, and the first part of every day, the morning, to the service of God. If some must acknowledge that they have spent the years of their childhood and youth in levity and forgetfulness of God, they should now at least devote the rest of their life with the greater zeal to his service, in order to redeem the lost time and to repair their neglect. And if many have devoted the first thoughts and actions of the day to the world and the things of the world, let them resolve from this day forward to direct their first thoughts to God and the business of their salvation, and never to omit their morning prayers.

3. On their way to the sepulchre they said one to another: "*Who shall roll us back the stone from the sepulchre? And looking, they saw the stone rolled back, for it was very great*"

(a.) The women did not think of the stone in the beginning, but only on their way to the sepulchre. This frequently occurs in good undertakings, we do not notice the obstacles which are always united with such undertakings in the beginning, but only later. Like the women, we must not be deterred from the good work, but continue it with confidence, God will help us. It is a well-known fact that the evil spirit, the world, and the flesh roll various stones into the way, but we must not on that account lose our courage, for "God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it" — 1 Cor. 10: 13.

(b.) St. Matthew tells us (28: 2) how the stone was removed from the sepulchre: "And behold, there was a great earthquake. For an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and coming, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it." We must not think that the angel removed the stone from the entrance of the sepulchre, that Christ could come forth from it. According to the doctrine of all the Fathers of the

Church, he had risen before the grave was opened; the angel merely rolled back the stone, and opened it to show that his Resurrection had taken place. Thus divine Providence supports constancy and confidence. By an earthquake the stone is flung from the entrance of the sepulchre, and the guards, who might have hindered the women in their pious work, take to flight. So powerful an assistance God gives to his servants who ardently long for him. He removes the obstacles which come from men and circumstances, and drives the devil, our arch-enemy, away. Therefore, trust always in God, who is strong in the weak, and never forsakes you, if in every peril you have recourse to him.

## PART II.

The women had arrived at the sepulchre. As the stone was rolled back they entered. The sepulchre was not as our graves, a perpendicular opening into the earth, but it was an excavation in the side of the rock and had an opening, through which one could enter into it, as into a room. "*And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed with a white robe; and they were astonished.*"

(a.) The young man was an angel.—*Matt.* 28: 2. "An angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and coming, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it." The angel appears in the form of a young man, for a sign that in heaven everything is young, beautiful, and joyous, and that the Saints on the last day shall rise in youth, full of strength and beauty, as Christ. What comfort for all pious Christians who have a sickly body, infected with numerous frailties!

(b.) The angel appears in a *white robe*, which is a lesson for us that we must have the white garment of innocence and purity, if we wish to go to heaven, since nothing that is defiled can enter into the city of God.—*Apoc.* 21: 27. White is the color of joy, the angel appeared in a white robe, to indicate that the Resurrection of Christ is a joyous festival for the Angels in heaven, as for men upon earth.

(c.) The angel *sat*, for a sign that the blessed in heaven enjoy eternal rest; he sat on the *right hand*, because he was a good angel, for all the good angels, with all the elect, will stand on the right at the general judgment, whilst the devils, with all the reprobate, will stand on the left. Where shall we stand? On the right, or on the left? The answer is plain: There where we now stand.

(d.) That the women were astonished at the sight of the angel, need not surprise us, how could man in his earthly weakness and misery

remain without fear and a holy astonishment, when he comes in contact with a heavenly being? Even Mary trembled when the angel came into her chamber to announce to her the heavenly salutation. Oh, that a holy tremor should always seize us when we enter a church, in which Jesus Christ is really present in the Blessed Eucharist, and still more when we receive him in holy communion.

2. The angel calmed the women, saying to them: "*Be not affrighted; ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he is risen, he is not here; behold the place where they laid him.*"

(a.) Those who seek Jesus have no reason to fear. The pious women felt a bitter sorrow for his death; now they are filled with consolation, and what they saw and heard became a source of heavenly joy. Happy the souls who seek the Crucified by detaching their hearts from the world by humility and penance! Blessed those who follow him even to the grave by dying to their sins and passions. They will have no reason to fear their risen God when the angel shall announce him as their Judge.

(b.) The angel announces to the women the Resurrection of Christ, and gives a convincing argument for it, saying: "*He is not here.*" This proof we also must give of our spiritual resurrection. If we can say with truth: "*I am not here;*" I am free from this sin, from this evil inclination, habit, or occasion, free from my former tepidity, then we are spiritually risen. Let us rejoice if it is so. But if it be not, let us labor that it may be so. Let us take care lest our zeal for penance resemble a fire of straw, which blazes up quickly, but equally as quickly is extinguished. Our amendment must be permanent, we must diminish our old faults with the greatest care, and not allow our zeal for virtue to be extinguished. Let us for this end avail ourselves of the suitable means, namely, the frequent renewal of our good resolutions and prayer.

3. Lastly, the angel commissions the women to announce the Resurrection of Christ to his disciples, especially to Peter, and to tell them that he goes before them into Galilee, and that there they shall see him, as he told them.

(a.) The disciples, who had abandoned the Lord so shamefully, really did not deserve to have such happy tidings brought to them. But Christ did not consider what they deserved, but what his love demanded. He also loves those who do not deserve it. What consolation for us, who are so unworthy of the love of Jesus. Oh, that he may not enter into judgment with us, but treat us according to the multitude of his mercies! May he be merciful to us, in life and death,

and on the day of judgment! But, that we may render ourselves worthy of his grace and mercy, let us devote our life to exercises of penance and good works.

(b.) Peter is mentioned by name; this is a proof of the regard and love which the divine Saviour entertains towards the Apostle. Peter is the Prince of the Apostles, and as such Christ especially honors him. Peter had loved Christ more than did the other Apostles; therefore Christ showed a particular love for him. Peter ceased not to bewail his sins; therefore the Lord wished, by an especial sign of his love, to raise and comfort him. When Christ honors Peter on account of his prerogative, we should likewise honor our superiors; even if they have faults. When Christ, on account of his greater love, gives him an especial proof of his love, we should love God with all our heart, and render ourselves worthy of his love. When Peter, on account of his sincere repentance and lifelong penance, was so highly favored, should we not be sorry for our sins and endeavor to expiate them by penitential works, in order to find grace with God?

#### PERORATION.

As the angel announced to the women, so I have announced to you to-day the Resurrection of Christ. Rejoice over this most important and consoling mystery of our holy religion, upon which rest our faith and hope, and profit by it, that in this holy Easter time you may celebrate your spiritual resurrection. Remain no longer in the grave of sin, of inordinate inclinations and passions. Come forth by a true conversion to God, walk in the life of grace, and "seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God,"—*Col. 3: 1*.

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### EASTER SUNDAY

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## 3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

#### THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

*"You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he is risen, he is not here."*—*Mark 16: 6.*

The days of mourning and grief are past, and have given place to days of joy. Every Christian heart, full of holy joy, unites in the song of Alleluia. Our divine Saviour, who three days ago died in

unutterable ignominy and pain on the cross, is gloriously risen from the dead. The pious women, who went out early in the morning to embalm his body, are the first to receive the joyful tidings of his Resurrection. Entering into the sepulchre, they behold an angel, who says to them: "You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he is risen, he is not here." What the angel announced to the women I shall also announce to you to-day. I shall speak on the Resurrection of the Lord, that fundamental truth of our holy faith, and explain to you—

- I. *That Jesus is risen,*
- II. *How he rose.*

### PART I.

Jesus is risen from the dead, the witnesses of this fact are—

1. *His Apostles and disciples.* They gave testimony of it before Jews and Gentiles, before the high and the low, the learned and the illiterate, friends and enemies, and not only now and then, but they always returned to it, and made it the foundation of all Christianity. "If Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins. Therefore, they also who have slept in Christ have perished."—*I. Cor.* 15: 17, 18. The evidence of the Apostles deserves the highest credit, for—

(a.) *They were not deceived.* If the risen Christ had appeared only to one or two of them, or only to a few women, they might have been deceived; but he appeared to all during the forty days he remained on earth, frequently held long conversations with them, gave them several instructions and commissions, showed them the print of his wounds, permitted them to touch him, and sat at the table and ate with them.—*Luke* 24: 36-43; *John* 21: 15, etc. As St Paul reports, he once appeared to five hundred disciples at once—*I. Cor.* 15: 5, 6. How could they be deceived? The Apostles were anything but credulous; on the contrary, they were so incredulous and hard of heart that Christ upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart, because "they did not believe those who had seen him after he was risen."—*Mark* 16: 14. Who could entertain for a moment the mischievous opinion that the Apostles might have been deceived when they believed and preached the Resurrection of Christ?

(b.) *Nor would they deceive others.* This contradicts their character, for they everywhere exhibited themselves as frank, open, simple, sincere men; nothing was more foreign to them than dissimulation, ambiguity, and falsehood. If we are to suppose that they had de-

ceived us, some advantage should have accrued to them, for nobody tells a lie in such an important matter for nothing. What advantage did their evidence of the Resurrection of Christ bring them? Not the slightest. This testimony, on the contrary, earned for them only hatred, contumely, persecution, sufferings, and death. Judge for yourselves. Would not the Apostles have been insane, if, for the sake of a lie, they would have chosen a life of tribulations, persecutions, and sufferings? Where is there a man in the whole world who tells a lie with the intention of drawing persecutions, sufferings, and death upon himself?

(c.) *They could not deceive, even if they would* Where did they announce the Resurrection of Christ? In Jerusalem, in the land of the Jews, the theatre of his actions and sufferings. Who were the men to whom they preached the Resurrection of Christ? The high-priests, the Scribes and Pharisees, and the Jews in general, who had an accurate knowledge of Christ, and knew, in particular, what occurred in the last days of his life. When did they announce the Resurrection of Jesus? It was only a few weeks after his death, on Pentecost. If the Apostles had really invented the Resurrection of Christ, would not all Jerusalem have risen against them and branded them as the most shameless impostors? But no one did this, not even his most inveterate enemies, the Scribes and Pharisees, and the Jewish priesthood. The evidence, then, of the Apostles in bearing testimony to the Resurrection of Christ is absolutely incontrovertible, and only malice and want of reason could contest it.

2 *His enemies* First, the Roman soldiers who guarded the sepulchre, and who reported the great miracle of the Resurrection of Christ to the high-priests. Their testimony is deserving of all credit, for the soldiers had no reason for telling a lie it certainly must have been very humiliating to them to depose such a testimony, because in doing so they ran the risk of court-martial, which might have resulted in their instant death.

The next witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus are the *high-priests*. When the soldiers reported that Christ was risen, they did not contradict them, but confirmed their report by giving them a sum of money, and saying to them: "Say you, that his disciples came by night, and stole him away when we were asleep."—*Matt. 28: 13*. Would they have had recourse to such a low and dishonorable means, if they had not firmly believed his Resurrection? If they could in the least have doubted or denied the account of the soldiers, would they not have reported the case to Pilate, and insisted upon an investigation and punishment of the soldiers?

Even the shameless lie of the bribed soldiers, that the disciples of Christ came and stole his body when they were asleep, gives evidence of his Resurrection. If the soldiers were asleep, how could they know and say that the disciples stole the body? Could they hear or see what occurred whilst they were asleep? How could it be thought possible that of all the sleeping guards not even one was awakened by the noise of the rolling back of the heavy stone? Finally, who could believe that the disciples, who were so timid at his Passion and death, would, on a sudden, display such undaunted courage as to execute so perilous a deed as that of stealing the body of Christ?

3. *The whole Christian universe.* The Apostles and their successors preached, not only in Jerusalem and Judea, but in the whole world, that Christ had died on the cross for the Redemption of mankind, and had risen again from the dead on the third day. And the Jews and Gentiles were convinced of this truth, and believed. And this belief has now existed more than eighteen hundred years and is spread over all the earth. How would it be possible for the belief in the Resurrection of the Lord to rest on error? If the Jews and Gentiles had not been completely convinced of the truth of this mystery, what would have induced them to embrace Christianity, which condemned their vices, and imposed self-denial, abnegation, and the mortification of the flesh upon them as a strict duty, and held out for them nothing in this life but contempt, persecution, and sufferings of every sort? Moreover, not only the Apostles, but also their successors, and the Christians of all centuries have confirmed their testimony by countless miracles, that Jesus has truly risen from the dead. What would follow from this, if they had been deceived or deceivers? Manifestly this, that God himself has led men into the greatest error, and retains them in this error, for more than eighteen hundred years. Would not such an inference be the greatest blasphemy? Jesus, therefore, is truly risen from the dead.

## PART II.

Christ raised himself—

1. *By his own power.* All men shall indeed rise out of their graves on the last day, yet not by their own power, but by the omnipotence of God. Not so Jesus Christ. With the same divine power that called back to life the youth of Naim, the daughter of Jairus, and Lazarus, he reunited his soul with his own body, which was lying dead in the grave, and raised it up to life. He expresses this truth of faith in the words: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."—*John 2. 19* And more emphatically yet in these words:

"I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself, and I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again."—*John* 10: 17, 18.

The raising of the Son is sometimes in the Sacred Scriptures attributed to the Father. Thus St. Paul says: "God the Father raised him (the Son) from the dead."—*Gal.* 1: 1. But we must not infer from this that Christ did not raise himself from the dead by his own power. Because the Son is of the same essence with the Father, the divine power, by which the Son raised himself from the dead, may be called the power of the Father, and consequently the raising of Jesus Christ is a work of the Father.

2. *With a glorious body*, as the Apostle says: "Our Lord Jesus Christ will reform the body of our lowliness, made like the body of his glory."—*Phil.* 3: 21. The sacred body of Christ was the same as before the Resurrection, but it was now in a more glorious state than before, and had qualities which it did not previously possess. These qualities are—

(a.) *Lucidity*. A wonderful transformation in the body of Jesus took place on Mount Thabor: "His face did shine as the sun, and his garments were white as snow."—*Matt.* 17: 2. This transfiguration of Christ, which upon Thabor was only transient and partial, after his Resurrection became permanent and general; not only his face, but his whole body was pure light, which effused a much brighter and more sparkling light than the noonday sun. If he had not suppressed the rays which ever streamed forth from his glorified body in his apparitions to them, the disciples would not have been able to endure the sight.

(b.) *The incapability of suffering and dying*. Because Christ at his Incarnation had assumed a true human body, his body, as that of every other man, was capable of suffering. And he in his earthly life really suffered hunger and thirst, heat and cold, fatigue and other inconveniences, and lastly the most painful death. After his Resurrection he was no longer susceptible of any painful sensation. Before his Resurrection his body was mortal, he could die a natural, a painful death; after his Resurrection his body was immortal; as he could no more suffer, so he could die no more. Therefore the Apostle writes: "We know that Christ, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more; death shall no more have dominion over him."—*Rom.* 6: 9.

(c.) *Agility*. The body of Christ is no more confined by space and time, it has lost everything heavy. It needed no time to go to any place,



it could pass in a moment through the immense space of creation and be in any spot he wishes.

(d.) *Immateriality* The body of Christ remained after his Resurrection a true body, but it laid aside everything dull and heavy, and became fine and spiritual, that, like a pure spirit, it could penetrate everywhere and render itself invisible to the eyes of men. Therefore he came forth from the grave without breaking the seal which the Jews had fixed upon it; therefore he also appeared to his disciples, the doors being shut, and disappeared suddenly, after every apparition.

All these qualities of the glorified body of Christ, only in a less degree, the bodies of the risen just will possess. This should be a powerful incentive for us to keep our body and its senses in honor, and to employ them for the service of God.

3 He retained in his glorified body the marks of his sufferings, in his hands, feet, and side the marks of his wounds; therefore he said to Thomas: "Put in thy finger hither (into the place of the nails), and see my hands, and bring hither thy hand, and put it into my side."

Jesus retained the marks of the wounds in his body—

(a.) *To give us a palpable proof of his Resurrection.* If he had appeared without the marks of his wounds, one might have been led to believe that it was only his spirit clothed in an apparent body. But showing himself with the marks of his wounds, no one could doubt that he was truly risen, as we see in the case of Thomas. "Happy marks of the wounds," says St. Bernard, "which attest the truth of the Resurrection and the Divinity of Christ."

(b.) *For a sign of his victory over death and hell.* The glistening wounds of his body are so many heralds of redeemed mankind, of heaven reopened, and hell conquered, and of so many trophies and ornaments of a glorious victory, as the scars and wounds received in bloody strife are marks of bravery, of undaunted courage, and the greatest ornament of a hero.

(c.) *In order by them to move his heavenly Father to mercy towards us.* If God at the sight of the many-colored rainbow remembers the promise which he made to men, that there should no more be waters of a flood to destroy all flesh (*Gen. 9: 12-16*), how much more will he restrain his wrath when he sees his beloved Son adorned with the precious wounds which he received for our Redemption. We must not, therefore, lose courage on account of our sins; the marks of

the wounds of Christ cry louder for mercy than our sins for vengeance.

(d.) *In order to show them on the day of judgment for the consolation of the just and the terror of the wicked.* At the sight of the five wounds of Jesus, the just will experience an unspeakable consolation, for these wounds represent to them the boundless love of the heavenly Father, who gave his only-begotten Son for their Redemption, and the equally great love of Jesus, who shed the last drop of his blood for them. They will also bring to their mind all the graces which they have received for their salvation and zealously employed, and the victories which they have gained over the world, the flesh, and the devil, the virtues which they have practiced, and the sufferings which they have endured with so perfect a patience. They will behold in the marks of the holy wounds of Christ the pledge of salvation, therefore at the sight of them their hearts will be full of consolation and joy. But the reprobate, at the sight of these wounds, will be seized with terror and consternation, for they will be obliged to say that they abused all the graces which Christ merited for them by his Passion and death, and that by their vices and sins they have crucified him anew.

#### PERORATION.

That the wounds of Christ may not on the day of judgment be to you an object of consternation and terror, but a source of consolation and joy, renew to-day a firm resolution to lead a good, pious, Christian life. If heretofore you have defiled your conscience with various sins, cleanse it, if it is not already cleansed, by a good confession, subdue your passions, mortify all inordinate inclinations, and remove everything displeasing to God. Be fervent in prayer, and practice, as far as you can, the Christian virtues. Walk constantly on the way of justice, that you may one day come forth from the grave with a glorified body and obtain in heaven the unfading palm of victory over the world, death, and hell.

## EASTER WEEK.

## 4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

### THE CELEBRATION OF THE FEAST OF EASTER.

*"You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: he is risen, he is not here."—Mark 16. 6.*

Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer, is risen from the dead. This is the great, glorious mystery of this day's feast, which fills the heart of every believer with a holy joy. The Jews every year celebrated the pasch in grateful remembrance of their deliverance from the slavery of Egypt and the gracious exemption from death of their first-born. The Jewish pasch was a type of our Christian Easter. All men were languishing in the slavery of Satan, but God had compassion on them and sent them another Moses, his only-begotten Son, who broke their chains and set them free.—*Gal. 4: 5.* To-day, coming forth from the sepulchre, he has overcome Satan, demolished his dominion of four thousand years' duration, and purchased for us grace, liberty, and life. Who would not rejoice to-day? Who would not praise and glorify Christ, and exclaim with the Apostle: "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? Thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."—*I. Cor. 15: 55-57.*

That the significance of the Easter feast may become yet clearer to us, we shall consider the celebration of this feast, namely—

- I. *The time of this celebration;*
- II. *The peculiarities of it.*

With regard to the time of the celebration of Easter, two questions are to be answered, namely, *When does it take place? and how long does it last?*

1. After an obstinate controversy of more than a hundred years between the East and the West as to the time of the celebration of Easter, the first General Council of the Church, held in the year 325, at the city of Nice in Bithynia, decreed that Easter should every year be celebrated on the first Sunday following the full moon after the vernal equinox. In order, however, that we may be better understood in all latitudes and hemispheres, we must explain more fully.

By the vernal equinox we understand that day on which the sun crosses the equator in spring, and which, by the most careful observa-

tion and computation, was found at the time of the Council to have fallen on the 21st of March, hence if the full moon falls on the 22d of March, and this 22d of March is a Saturday, the next day will be the first Sunday after the full moon, and it will be Easter Sunday. But suppose that the moon would be full on the 20th of March, this moon will not be considered the Easter moon, but the next full moon, twenty-nine days later, which will be on the 18th of April, will be the paschal moon. Now, should this 18th of April be a Sunday, Easter would be the following Sunday, or the 25th of April. Easter, you see then, can be no earlier than the 23d of March, nor later than the 25th of April. But though Easter may come earlier or later, it always falls, at least in our hemisphere, in the time of spring. This time is significant, and symbolizes very beautifully the mysteries of the Easter feast.

(a.) In winter the days are short and but feebly illumined by the sun; the wind is sharp and cold, everything is desolate and dead. This sad time of winter is an eloquent picture of the wretched condition of mankind before their Redemption. There was no knowledge of God any more upon earth; with the exception of the Jews, all nations were sunk into the most abominable idolatry; vice and abomination of every description overflowed the world and all the germs of spiritual life seemed to have died out. Behold the gloomy winter of the human race! Finally Christ appears, announces his heavenly doctrine, suffers and dies, rises from the dead and establishes his Church. Then everything assumes a more cheerful aspect; a light arises to men, they know how far they have erred from the way of truth and virtue, are converted by the preaching of the Apostles, and embrace Christianity. Behold the spring-time of grace which came to men through Christ, the risen Redeemer.

(b.) The Resurrection of Christ is the pledge of our future resurrection. "By a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead. And as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive."—*I. Cor.* 15: 21, 22. In this holy time of Easter, seeing Christ triumph over death and the grave, we turn our gaze to the end of time and rejoice in the thought that we shall rise again and reign with our Saviour in heaven. Again, it is spring-time that symbolizes to us this consoling truth for in spring everything revives, grows, and blooms; so our body will one day revive, be restored to youth, and come forth from the grave clarified and immortal.

(c.) At Easter we should celebrate our spiritual resurrection, according to the word of the Apostle: "We are buried together with him by baptism unto death; that as Christ is risen from the dead by

the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in the newness of life."—*Rom. 6: 4*. In order to rise to the life of grace, we must, according to the precept of the Church, go to confession and communion. Again, it is the spring-time that gives us a clear idea of this spiritual resurrection. As long as man continues in sin, he is dead, and resembles winter, which can bring forth no fruit. But if, animated by the ray of divine grace, he is truly converted, he resembles spring, which awakens nature from its deadly slumber and breathes new life into it. As spring disposes all to joy and hilarity, so the newly-converted Christian experiences joy in his interior, and enjoys heavenly peace. But as spring awakens nature from its torpidity and causes everything to bloom, but leaves the maturing of the fruits to summer and autumn, so a Christian at the beginning of his conversion is not yet perfect, the young grace of life must grow and come to perfection by degrees.

Thus spring very beautifully symbolizes the mysteries which the Easter time comprises. Let us here acknowledge the wisdom of the Church, which makes use of natural things, in order to illustrate the mysteries of our holy religion and to educate us as pious Christians.

2. The ecclesiastical celebration includes not only Easter Sunday or Easter week, but comprises six weeks, and lasts till Pentecost.

(a.) This long celebration of the Easter feast has its reason in its importance, for it reminds us of the mystery which is the foundation of our faith and hope, that is, of the Resurrection of the Lord. If Christ had not risen from the dead, our faith would be destitute of the last sufficient proof of its truth and divinity, our prospect into eternity would be obscured, and our Redemption, so to speak, incomplete. "If Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins."—*I. Cor. 15: 17*.

But since Christ, as he often foretold, is risen again, the seal of divinity is stamped on our faith, our hope rests on an immovable rock, and the work of our Redemption is complete; and full of joy, we can exclaim with the royal prophet: "Our soul hath been delivered, as a sparrow out of the snare of the fowlers. The snare is broken, and we are delivered."—*Psa. 123: 7*.

(b.) The Church endeavors also to revive our Easter joy by the gospels of the six Sundays after Easter, in which she presents to us the graces and fruits of the Resurrection of Christ. In the gospel of the first Sunday after Easter, Christ arisen gives to his Apostles the power of forgiving sins, the Sacrament of Penance appearing as the first fruit of the Resurrection. In the gospel of the second Sunday, Christ por-

trays himself as the good Shepherd of his sheep, his pastoral care for the faithful, the gradual propagation of his Church, and the blessings which he brings to all nations, appear as the second fruit. In the gospel for the third Sunday, Christ speaks of the sufferings of his adherents, which are only momentary and soon end, when the imperishable joys of heaven begin. The eternal beatitude after short sufferings is the third fruit. In the gospel of the fourth Sunday, Jesus promises to send the Holy Ghost, and as a further fruit of the Resurrection, appears the mission of the Holy Ghost in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful. In the gospel for the fifth Sunday, Christ assures us that his heavenly Father will give us all that we shall ask in his name; the hearing of our prayer, then, is another fruit of the Resurrection. And lastly, in the gospel of the sixth Sunday, our Saviour renews the repeated promise that the Holy Ghost shall come: that he will guide the Church and preserve her to the end of time; thus the perpetuity of the Church through the Holy Ghost is also a fruit of the Resurrection of Jesus.

## PART II.

The principal peculiarities of the Easter celebration are—

1. *The picture of the risen Saviour with a standard in his hand.* Christ fought with the powers of darkness as long as he sojourned on earth. When he died on the cross he seemed conquered; hell and its adherents exulted. But on the third day he comes forth from the grave glorious and triumphant over death and hell, the head of the old serpent is crushed, and mankind is redeemed. The standard in his right hand reminds us of this glorious victory of Christ. As often as we look at that picture we must heartily rejoice over the victory of the Lord, but also resolve courageously to fight against the enemies of our salvation, that we may overcome them. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life."—*James 1: 12.*

2. *The "Vidi aquam,"* which is chanted in the Easter time in place of "*Asperges me.*" These words, "*Vidi aquam,*" are taken from the Prophet Ezekiel (47), and read: "Behold, waters came down to the right side of the temple, Alleluia, and all to whom these waters came have been healed, and shall say, Alleluia, Alleluia." This mysterious water reminds us—

(a.) In general, of *all the graces which flow to us continually from the Holy Catholic Church*, and of which we in the Easter time think with heartfelt joy, because Christ at this time accomplished the work of our Redemption.

(b.) Especially of *Baptism*, in which we have been cleansed from all stains of sin and become children of God and heirs of heaven. That we should call to mind at Easter the grace of Baptism especially comes from this, that in the first ages of the Church the solemn administration of Baptism took place at Easter, wherefore at present baptismal water is blessed on Holy Saturday.

(c.) Of *Easter confession and Easter communion*, by which we are again cleansed and sanctified. Let us thank God for this grace, praise and glorify him, and sing a joyful Alleluia. Perhaps there are some among us who, instead of joyful "*Vidi aquam*," should sing rather "*Asperges me*." Oh, that by a worthy reception of the holy Sacraments they would place themselves in the state of grace, that spiritually risen they may sing the joyful "*Vidi aquam*!"

3. *The Alleluia*, which the Church during Easter time repeats incessantly. This Hebrew word means, "Praise the Lord," and is therefore an invitation to the praise of God for the benefits and graces which we have received. The Jews chanted the six Alleluias, that is, the six psalms of praise and thanksgiving of David, on their great festivals, in order to thank God for his graces, and to praise and glorify him. From them the word passed into the Church, and since the time of Pope Damasus (366) it is in general use. We have far more reason with joyful heart to sing Alleluia than the Jews; they were freed from the servitude of Pharaoh, we from the slavery of the devil; the Jews were conducted only into an earthly Chanaan, but we are called to the heavenly one, in which we shall reign for ever. But if we wish the Alleluia to please God, it must come not only from the mouth, but from the heart; otherwise the word of the Lord will apply to us: "This people glorify me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."—*Is.* 29: 13.

4. *The custom of standing at prayer*, as at the "*Angelus*," while at other seasons the kneeling posture is prescribed. This ecclesiastical ordinance reminds us—

(a.) Of the Resurrection of Christ, the memory of which we celebrate during the whole Easter time.

(b.) Of our own resurrection, which in this holy time is to be effected, as well as of the duty to remain in the state of grace, according to the word of the Apostle: "He that standeth, let him take heed lest he fall."—*I. Cor.* 10: 12.

(c.) Of the admonition of the Apostle: "If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are on the

earth."—*Col.* 3: 1, 2. After Jesus has redeemed us from the slavery of sin and Satan, and called us to his service, we must not again attach our heart to the world and its lusts, but we must aspire to higher and better goods, that we may reach our eternal destiny.

5. The *Easter candle*, which is blessed on Holy Saturday, placed at the gospel side of the high altar and lighted at high mass. It represents Christ risen.

(a.) The pure white wax, of which it consists, signifies the clarified body of Christ.

(b.) The five openings with the grains of incense typify the five holy wounds which Jesus retained after his Resurrection.

(c.) The light reminds us of his Divinity and his words: "I am the light of the world."

(d.) It is taken away on Ascension Thursday, to indicate that Christ by his Ascension into heaven has withdrawn his visible presence from us.

#### PERORATION.

The time and the peculiarities of the celebration of Easter remind us of the mystery of the glorious Resurrection of the Lord. Christ, our head, is risen from the dead. Let us also rise from the grave of sin to the life of grace. Christ dies no more, but lives for ever. Let us no more die the death of sin, but let us preserve with the greatest solicitude the life of grace to our last breath. Christ is crowned with honor and glory; let us also fight the good fight, that as conquerors we may be crowned. Amen.



## EASTER SUNDAY.

## 5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

### THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, AN EMBLEM OF OUR SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION.

*"You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he is risen, he is not here."—Mark. 16. 6.*

"Christ is truly risen, Alleluia." This is the song of joy and exultation which the Church in the joy of her heart intones on this festival day, and during the Easter time repeats again and again. Death and the grave could not retain their prey; Jesus Christ, as he had so frequently foretold, is truly risen from the dead on the third day. But as Christ rose from the dead to-day corporally, so we should rise spiritually in this holy Easter time, according to the words of the Apostle: "As Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life."—*Rom 6: 4.* The Resurrection of Christ will profit us nothing if we remain in the state of sin. But the question is: When can we be convinced that our spiritual resurrection is true? If our resurrection has the marks of the Resurrection of Christ.

- I. If the stone is rolled back,*
- II. If we leave the grave, and*
- III. If we no more return to it.*

#### PART I.

1. The sepulchre in which Christ was laid, was secured by a massive stone, upon which the Jews fixed the seal of public authority. It could not be moved from the entrance without great labor. This stone was the cause of a great deal of anxiety to the women who went out early in the morning to anoint Jesus, who said one to another: Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre? But having come to the grave, they saw the stone rolled back. St. Matthew tells us so in these words: "There was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and coming, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it," (28: 2). I must remark here that Christ had already risen before the stone was rolled back and the grave was opened; the stone rolled back was only a sign that he was truly risen from the dead.

2. Our spiritual resurrection must have this sign, the stone that

is lying on our conscience must be removed. Every sinner, whatever sins he may have committed, has a stone, a heavy weight, on his conscience. There are sinners who do not confess sincerely, who, out of fear or shame, conceal sins in confession, or who do not confess a circumstance that should necessarily be mentioned, or who confess candidly but without a true supernatural contrition, or a firm purpose of amendment, and of avoiding sin and the proximate occasion of sin, of restoring ill-gotten goods, of repairing damages, of retracting slander and calumny, and of being reconciled with their enemies. These are heavy stones, which perhaps are lying upon the hearts of many for a long time. Have you by a good confession at this holy Easter time rolled back these stones from your conscience? Have you overcome yourselves and confessed all your sins with the necessary circumstances? Have you repeated and made valid the confessions which were invalid for the want of contrition and a firm purpose of amendment? Have you restored your neighbor's property and repaired the damage done him? Are you reconciled with all your enemies? Are you really resolved to avoid sin and the proximate occasion of sin? If you can answer these questions in the affirmative, things stand well with you, the stone is rolled back, and I can here congratulate you on your spiritual resurrection. But if you must answer them negatively, you are really to be pitied: the stone is yet on your conscience, and you are lying in the grave of sin. Whoever has a heavy stone on his conscience, let him roll it back, that this Easter may not be to him a time of perdition, but of salvation.

## PART II.

1. Christ proved his Resurrection also *by leaving the sepulchre and no more returning to it*. The women approaching the sepulchre, saw the stone rolled back; they went to anoint his body, but he was not there; they saw an angel, who said to them: "You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he is risen, he is not here." The angel told the women emphatically, that Christ was no longer in the sepulchre, in order to convince them of his Resurrection.

2. We must bring the same proof for our spiritual resurrection; *we must come out of the grave of sin*. This must be done—

(a.) *Interiorly*, by a complete and thorough transformation and amendment of the heart. The whole disposition of the sinner is perverse: he takes pleasure in what is evil, virtue is odious or at least indifferent to him. He must totally change his mind, he must hate and detest sin from the bottom of his heart, and love virtue and long for it. God requires this change, for he says: "Be converted to me

with all your heart, in fasting, in weeping, and in mourning. And rend your hearts, and not your garments."—*Joel* 2: 12, 13. The Jews used to rend their garments to express their sorrow and penitential mourning, but as many rent their garments without any interior sorrow and detestation of sin, God exhorted them that they should not rend their garments, but their hearts, that is, they should not only exteriorly but also interiorly repent of their sins and do penance, because the former without the latter would be unprofitable. This interior transformation and amendment of heart we find in all true penitents. A certain young man who for some time had entertained a criminal intercourse with a young woman and had grievously offended God, made a good confession at Easter, and in order to eradicate his passion, undertook a long journey. Returning after a while, he twice met the woman, but he passed her by without looking at her. The third time, she stopped him, saying: "What is the matter with you; do you not know me any more? I am such a one." He answered: "You may be such a one, but I am not now the person who knew such a one!"

All must be so disposed, with whom a true spiritual resurrection takes place; they must be totally changed from what they formerly were. Sin must no longer lie in their heart, as a corpse in the grave. Is this the case with us? Can every one of us say: I hate and detest sin above all things? I am resolved to amend my life and to offend God no more. Ah, how many may there be among us who must acknowledge the contrary. They confess because it is Easter, and because "they fear the people," (*Luke* 20: 19), to keep up their reputation as good Christians, but they are not in earnest with their amendment of life, they lack the principal requirements for a good confession, contrition and resolution; they have after confession as before it, a perverse disposition of mind, their heart is attached to sin, and they have not the slightest intention of beginning a new life. The wretches, they lie yet in the grave of sin, and their last state is worse than the first, for they have received the holy Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist unworthily, and have added the guilt of sacrilege to the catalogue of their crimes.

(b.) *Exteriorly.* He that is transformed and renewed interiorly, manifests it also exteriorly; he carefully avoids everything that is evil, and does what is good with fervor and zeal. St. Peter having been moved by the gracious look of Christ to the knowledge of his sin and to repentance, returns no more to the occasion, but goes out and weeps bitterly, to indicate that his heart is bruised, he denies his Lord and Master no more, but confesses him before his greatest enemies, the high-priests, Scribes and Pharisees, and not only now and

then, but again and again, as long as he lives, and for his confession cheerfully suffers prison and death. St. Paul, who entertained the most bitter hatred against the Christians and persecuted them most violently, displayed after his conversion a most admirable zeal; he made long and most fatiguing journeys by land and water for the propagation of the faith, and in all things "exhibited himself as a minister of God in much patience, in tribulation, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in prisons, in seditions, in labors, in watchings, in fastings," (*II. Cor. 6: 4, 5*), and nothing, "neither life, nor death, nor Angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, was able to separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus."—*Rom. 8: 38, 39*.

In the same way all true penitents will manifest exteriorly their spiritual resurrection by an amendment of life. They will no longer keep any sinful company, nor curse, blaspheme, nor speak immodestly, nor give themselves any more to drunkenness and gambling; in a word, they will avoid most carefully the sins they have committed and the proximate occasions of sin, and fulfil the duties of their religion and state with commendable fervor, which they formerly neglected or fulfilled only very imperfectly. They will be diligent in attendance at church on Sundays and holidays, go frequently to confession and communion, love to read spiritual books and hold pious conversation, dress modestly, live temperately and soberly, be in peace with all members of their household, obey their superiors, and if they are fathers or mothers, lead their children to virtue by meekness and a good example.

Thus true penitents show that they have left the grave of sin. But what shall we say of Christians who, after their Easter confession and communion, live as godlessly and wickedly as before, and in whom not the least amendment is noticeable? What else, indeed, than that they are not spiritually risen?

### PART III.

Our Lord raised three dead persons to life: *The youth of Naim, the daughter of Jairus, and Lazarus of Bethania*. All three after returning to life were strong, healthy, and lived yet many years; but after all, they died again and went down into the grave. Their resurrection from the dead was not durable. It is not so with the resurrection of Christ. having left the sepulchre, he returns there no more; he will die no more for ever. "We know that Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more; death shall no more have dominion over him."—*Rom. 6: 9*.

As Christ so we after our spiritual resurrection, must no more re-

turn into the grave, no more die the death of sin, but perseveringly walk in the life of grace. What would it have profited St Peter, St Paul, St. Magdalen, and others, if they had amended their lives for some time and then relapsed into their former sins? "If the just man turn himself away from his justice, and do iniquity, all his justices which he had done, shall not be remembered, and in his sin, which he hath committed, in them he shall die."—*Ezech.* 18. 24. Christ himself says: "No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."—*Luke* 9: 62. This applies to all those who, after having received the Sacraments at Easter, amend their lives for a little while, and then relapse; they forfeit the grace of God and render themselves liable to eternal damnation.

Oh, how many are there who, after the Easter time is passed, will return into the old grave of sin! In the last days of Holy Week a candlestick with thirteen candles is placed in the church; all these candles burn at the beginning of the canonical hours, but during the progress of these hours one after the other is extinguished, till there is but one burning, and this is taken from the altar and hidden behind it. As with these candles, so it is with many Christians in Easter time. They go to confession and communion, the light of grace burns in their hearts, but Easter time being over, one after the other allows the light of the love and grace of God to go out of his heart, or, without speaking figuratively, they return to their old worldly and sinful life. It has been so every Easter, and there is very much reason to fear that it will be so again this year. But how deplorable the condition of such relapsing sinners! They are guilty of the greatest ingratitude towards God, because, after he has shown them mercy and forgiven their sins, they offend him again; they cast away the jewel which is worth more than the whole world, sanctifying grace, and, as it were, compel God to withdraw his hand from them and expose them to the danger of dying in sin, and being buried in hell. Oh, that they would take to heart the words of St. Peter: "For if, having fled from the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, being again entangled in them, they are overcome, their latter state is become unto them worse than the former. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than, after they have known it, to turn back from that holy commandment which was delivered to them."—*II. Peter* 2: 20, 21.

#### PERORATION.

These are the signs which, after the example of the corporal resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, your spiritual resurrection must have. You *must roll back the stone from the grave*, that is,

cleanse your conscience from all sins by a penitential and sincere confession; you *must come forth from the grave*, interiorly and exteriorly, by the renovation and amelioration of your mind and life; *you must no more return into the grave*, but with constancy and perseverance walk on the way of penance, and guard carefully against every relapse. Well for you will it be if of every one of you it can be said what the angel said to-day of Christ: "He is risen!" And if you, like the risen Lord, die no more, but preserve the life of grace to the end, a glorious resurrection on the last day and a feast of joy in heaven will be your reward. Amen.

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### EASTER SUNDAY.

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## 6. DOGMATIC-MORAL SKETCH.

### THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, A HOLY MYSTERY FOR CHRISTIAN BELIEF AND LIFE.

*"You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he is risen."*—Mark 16: 6.

The feast of Easter is undoubtedly the greatest and most joyful of all the feasts of the Ecclesiastical year, for it represents to us the accomplishment of our Redemption. Christ came "to seek and to save that which was lost," (Luke 19: 10), and whatever he did in his earthly life, had no other end than to atone for our sins and to redeem us. But according to the decree of divine Providence the work of our Redemption could be effected only by the death of Christ on the cross. It was only on the cross that Christ could cry out to the world: "It is consummated." To-day, rising from the grave, adorned with the marks of his holy wounds, he appears in the true sense of the word as the Saviour, the Redeemer of the world. Sin is blotted out, the kingdom of Satan destroyed, the prince of the world cast out, the power of hell broken, and redeemed man once more with filial confidence can look up to heaven and pray: Abba! Father. Hence also the joy which reigns supreme to-day in the whole Christian world; hence the song of joy and exultation of the Church: Alleluia, this is the day which the Lord hath made; let us exult and rejoice in it.

But Easter is not only a time of joy and exultation for every Christian heart, but it contains also a mystery which is of the greatest importance for the Christian belief and life; for the Resurrection of Christ is, as we shall consider to-day,—

- I. *The foundation of our faith;*
- II. *The most powerful incentive to a pious life.*

## PART I.

I. *The Resurrection of Christ is the foundation of our faith.*

*No one can doubt the truth and divinity of our faith, if Christ is risen again.*

(a.) The prophets foretold that the Messiah would rise again from the dead. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (that is, in the grave), nor wilt thou give thy holy one to see corruption."—*Ps.* 15: 10. There can be no doubt that this prophecy refers to Christ, because St. Peter emphatically applies it to him.—*Acts.* 2: 27. The prophets Isaias (11: 10) and Osee (6: 3) also speak of the Resurrection of Christ. The former says that the Gentiles shall beseech him, and his sepulchre shall be glorious (on account of his glorious Resurrection); the latter, that God will receive him and the third day raise him up. Now, if Christ is risen, the predictions of the prophets are fulfilled, and he must truly be the promised Messiah.

(b.) Christ frequently and emphatically foretold that he would die, but would rise again on the third day. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man." "For he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon, and after they have scourged him, they will put him to death, and *the third day he shall rise again.*"—*Luke* 18: 31-33. "As Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights, so shall *the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.*"—*Matt.* 12: 40. "Destroy this temple, and *in three days I will raise it up.*"—*John* 2: 19. That the Jews, especially the Scribes and Pharisees, understood these prophecies of Christ very well, is evident from the fact that after his death they applied to Pilate for a guard to watch the sepulchre: "Sir, we have remembered, that that seducer said, while he was yet alive: After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, the sepulchre to be guarded until the third day, lest his disciples come, and steal him away, and say to the people: 'He is risen from the dead;' so the last error shall be worse than the first."—*Matt.* 27: 63, 64. If Christ had not risen from the dead on the third day, we could not believe him to be the Son of God and Redeemer of the world, because his prophecy would not have been fulfilled.

(c.) It is true, we have still other evidences of his dignity of Messiah and of his Divinity besides his Resurrection. Such an evidence is the

*holiness of his life*, which even his enemies acknowledged, for upon his question: "Which of you shall convince me of sin?" (*John* 8: 46), they kept silence. Judas confessed: "I have betrayed innocent blood," (*Matt.* 27: 4), and Pilate declared before the multitude of people: "I am innocent of the blood of this just man; look you to it."—*Matt.* 27: 24. But important as is this evidence of the holiness of Christ, it would not of itself be conclusive nor sufficient to raise his Divinity above all doubt, for as there are wolves in sheep's clothing, we might be tempted to think that the holiness of Christ was only an outward semblance and hypocrisy.

Our Lord also proved the authenticity of his divine mission by miracles, for he healed all kinds of sickness and raised up the dead; but many objections might be raised against these miracles: one might say that they were only delusions and apparent miracles, which he did in compact with and by the power of the devil. He says himself that false Christs and false prophets would arise, and do great signs and wonders, inasmuch as to deceive, if it were possible, even the elect.—*Matt.* 24: 44.

If Christ had not risen from the dead, neither his sanctity nor his miracles could be a conclusive evidence of the Divinity of his person and doctrine. But his Resurrection banishes every doubt. As he is risen from the dead, God his Father has given testimony to him that he is his only-begotten Son; and as he raised himself from the dead by his own power, he immediately proved that he is true God; for this could be done by God alone. The Resurrection of Christ, therefore, is the foundation of our faith. He who believes that Christ has risen from the dead has no reason to yield to doubt on any article of his faith. Hence it was to the Resurrection of Christ that the Apostles chiefly appealed, to convince the Jews and Gentiles of his Divinity and the truth of his Gospel; and St. Paul gives utterance to this remarkable expression: "If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is vain."—*I. Cor.* 15: 14.

2. But is it certain that Christ rose from the dead? Yes; and the witnesses are—

(a.) *His enemies*—namely, the soldiers who guarded the sepulchre, and the High Council of the Jews. The earth quakes, an angel in dazzling array descends from heaven, and removes with angelic ease the ponderous obstruction and lays open the grave for the inspection of our Lord's anxious adherents; consternation seizes the guards and they fall down stunned to the ground; they have scarcely recovered from the stupor, when they take to flight, hasten to the Sanhedrin, and exclaim: "Christ is risen." It is probable that the members of the



High Council contradicted their testimony and reproached them with harsh words, but as the soldiers continued their assertion, they were placed in a very bad predicament, and could find no way to get out of it except by bribing the soldiers with a large sum of money, that they should spread the lie that his disciples came when they were asleep, and stole his body.

(b.) *The Apostles.* It was hard for them to believe the Resurrection of their Master. When the women told them that Christ was risen, they believed them not. He was obliged to appear to them, to discourse with them, to show them the marks of his wounds, and allow himself to be touched by them, to sit at the table and eat with them, before they laid aside their doubts and believed in his Resurrection. Who could reject their testimony, especially since it brought them not the least advantage, but only hatred, persecution, prison, and death? Who could doubt their testimony in the least, as they confirmed it with the greatest miracles, and therefore God himself vouched for the truth of their words?

(c.) *The multitude of people to whom the risen Christ appeared.* He appeared not only to the women, to Peter, and the rest of the Apostles, and to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, but, as St. Paul (*I. Cor.* 15: 6) says, to five hundred disciples at once. Now, if so great a multitude of men saw the risen Saviour, and as St. Matthew says (28: 27), adored him, and unanimously testified to his Resurrection, who would yet contradict such a testimony?

(d.) *The circumstance, finally, that the Resurrection of Christ was universally known, especially in all Jerusalem.* When St. Peter, fifty days afterwards, on the feast of Pentecost, preached publicly of the Resurrection of Christ, there was not one that contradicted him; even the High Council, the Scribes and the Pharisees, dared not confront him and the other Apostles, and charge them with and convince them of an untruth. All they afterwards did was to forbid them to preach in the name of Jesus, to scourge them and cast them into prison.

The Resurrection of Christ is, therefore, a fact which can not be reasonably controverted, and consequently, the foundation of our holy faith. But it is also the most powerful incentive to a pious, holy life.

## PART II.

The Resurrection of Christ encourages us to the faithful performance of the divine will in every situation of life.

(a.) "My food is to do the will of him that sent me, that I may per-

fect his work."—*John* 4: 34. Our Saviour could say this in truth, for his whole life upon earth was one continual, uninterrupted fulfilment of the will of his heavenly Father. For thirty years he leads a hidden life, because his Father wills it; he begins his public life, goes about, teaches, works miracles, and finally dies on the cross in unspeakable tortures and sufferings, because it is the will of his Father. Thus the human will of Christ was entirely subject to the will of God; he did everything that God willed, and in whatever manner he willed. How gloriously do we see him rewarded for the faithful performance of the divine will! To-day, when he came forth from the grave with a glorified body, "God hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and in hell. And that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father."—*Phil.* 2: 9-11. What a glorious end! What a great reward!

If we consider our risen Redeemer in the state of his glory, must not we also be encouraged to do the will of God in good as well as in evil days? What does not man do to procure for himself a pleasant earthly life? What tribulations, what perils, and humiliations does he not undergo, not only for days and weeks, but for years? And we can be dilatory in doing the will of God, knowing, as we do, that if we work and suffer with Christ we shall be glorified with him!

## 2. *To a constant warfare against the enemies of our salvation.*

(a.) The life of Christ was a continual combat with Satan, the prince of the world. He had come to crush the serpent's head, to destroy the kingdom of Satan, to recover for us the bright inheritance which we had lost by sin, and to redeem us from the slavery of centuries; but Satan resisted with all his might, hence a continual contest and struggle. In the desert, where he tempted our Lord three times and was overcome as often, he had found out that he alone could not prevail against him; then he looked for confederates to help him frustrate his labor for the redemption of mankind. And he found willing tools in the Scribes and Pharisees and the Jews in general. What did not Christ endure from them, how often did they lay snares to catch him in his speech, how did they calumniate, blaspheme and insult him, in order to destroy all confidence in him and render him odious to the people! They did not shrink even from brute force, for more than once were they about to lay hands on him, and to take his life. Finally the devil entered into Judas, who betrayed his Lord and Master, and delivered him into the hands of his enemies. Jesus dies on the cross. Hell is apparently successful, and

its blind instruments exult in their triumph, believing that they have conquered and destroyed the name of Jesus for ever. But the intoxication of victory is of short duration. Easter Sunday announces a victory such as heaven and earth never before witnessed. Christ rises from the dead, glorious and immortal; the nations, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, adore him; Judaism and Paganism fall, and the kingdom of Christ is spread over all the earth.

(b.) Warfare is our lot upon earth. "The life of man upon earth is a warfare, and his days are like the days of a hireling."—*Job 7 : 1*. We carry about us a wicked enemy, our concupiscence, which prevents us reposing in God, and prepares violent temptations for us. We must fight against the devil, who, full of hatred and envy, pursues and everywhere lays snares, seeking our ruin. We live in a world which endeavors to seduce us by its false maxims, scandals, and bad examples. Especially in our days Infidels and Freethinkers do their utmost to tear religion and the fear of God out of our hearts. Who can listen to their language, or read their papers and books, without being horrified by their hatred of Christianity? Who would not be discouraged at the aspect of the persecutions which the Catholic Church and her children are obliged to suffer? But let us not be of little faith; Christ, who crushed the head of the serpent, forsakes us not; his victory is our victory, for he has merited for us the grace to overcome every enemy. Let us gather round the banner of the cross, and no power, either of man or the devil, can harm us. And what a triumph, if we are found brave warriors! we shall enter with him into his glory and receive a great reward, as he says himself: "To him that overcometh, I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God."—*Apoc. 2 : 7*.

### 3. *Earnestly to aspire to perfection.*

The Resurrection of Christ is the pledge and type of our future resurrection. Christ is our head, we his members; what has been done with the head, must also be done with the members. As certain as Christ is risen, so certain shall we rise again. "If Christ be preached that he rose again from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen again."—*I. Cor. 15 : 12, 13*. Christ is also the *type of our resurrection*. "Our Lord Jesus Christ will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of his glory."—*Phil. 3 : 21*. The bodies of the just, therefore, after their resurrection, will resemble the body of the risen Christ; they will be finally transformed and glorified; they will become impassible,

immortal, spiritual, and united with the soul, will enjoy an unspeakable felicity in heaven.

#### PERORATION.

"Be mindful that the Lord Jesus Christ is risen from the dead."—*II. Tim. 2: 8.* This truth of our holy religion is the foundation of our faith and the strongest incentive to a holy life. If you are tempted against faith interiorly or exteriorly, say: "What I believe, is the doctrine of Christ, but he is risen from the dead, he is the Son of God, the infallible truth, I therefore stand firm in my faith and nothing in the world shall ever make me waver in it." If it seems hard sometimes to walk the way of holiness, and if you must endure hard trials, falter not in your courage, look up to Christ; having finished his course, he triumphs over sin, death, and hell, now and for evermore. His infinitely blessed lot shall be ours; therefore follow him courageously, and trusting in his grace, devote yourselves to his service to your last breath; then the blessed Easter morning will also dawn for you in heaven, where, with the Angels and Saints, you will sing an everlasting Alleluia. Amen.

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#### EASTER SUNDAY.

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## 7. MORAL SKETCH.

#### THE EASTER JOY AND SORROW OF THE CHURCH.

*"You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he is risen."*—*Mark 16: 6.*

Our holy mother the Church has, during the past Lenten season, and especially during Holy Week, passed through a sad ordeal. On Good Friday morning we beheld her clad in the widow's weeds, the black habiliments of grief, with no one to comfort her, as with disheveled locks, she stood sinking, as it were, beneath the weight of her profound sorrow, and mourning at the loss of her divine Spouse. The absence of solemn chant at the celebration of the holy mystery of the Mass, her bare altars and covered crucifixes, her melancholy office of *Tenebræ*, the silence of the bells for the past three days,—all breathed mournfulness and sadness on account of the bitter Passion and death of Christ, our Lord and Redeemer. From her maternal breast, proceeded that plaintive cry: "Oh, all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there

be any sorrow like to my sorrow."—*Lam.* 1: 12. But to-day her mother's sorrow is changed into a mother's joy; for Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, lives, and dies no more: therefore she sings: "The Lord is risen. Alleluia."

Still another joy is prepared for the Church at Easter. Many of her children will rise from the grave of sin to the life of grace, so that she can say of them: "This my son, this my daughter, was dead, and is come to life again."—*Luke* 15: 24. But as there is no perfect and unalloyed joy here below, so the joy of the Church is not perfect; it is mixed with sorrow, and this sorrow is caused by those of her children who do not rise spiritually at Easter, or who, after having risen, fall back into the grave of sin. As we all are of the number of those who cause either joy or sorrow to the Church, it will be profitable to meditate to-day—

*I. On the Easter joy;*

*II. On the Easter sorrow of the Church.*

#### PART I.

The Easter joy of the Church is caused—

*I. By the corporal Resurrection of her divine Founder; she rejoices—*

1. *On account of the intense love which she bears towards him.* No bride loves her bridegroom, no mother her child, as the Church her Spouse and Redeemer. She loves him *for his own sake*, because as God and man he is infinitely lovely; she loves him out of gratitude on account of all the graces and benefits which flow to her from his hands, and which are boundless. What has he not done for her! what has he not suffered for her! what power has he not given her! how many and precious means of grace has he not deposited in her hands! How sublime is her destiny, to triumph for ever in heaven! If we love a person much, we rejoice at his good fortune and prosperity, and our joy is the greater, if he has been struggling in great misery and now on a sudden comes to honor and riches. Why should the Church not rejoice at Easter, when after so great humiliation and contumely, after long sufferings and an ignominious and painful death, she sees him come forth gloriously from the grave and crowned with honor and glory?

2. *On account of the graces which she owes to the Resurrection of Christ.* These graces are—

(a.) *Her introduction into the world.* Suppose Christ had not risen from the dead, what would have become of the Church? She

would have, so to say, perished in her cradle, for no one would have believed in the Divinity of her Founder. His Apostles and disciples, themselves yet weak in faith, would not have even dared to preach the Gospel and the Divinity of Christ; and if they had done so, no one would have believed them; they would have been rejected as impostors and cheats by both Jew and Gentile. Only the fact that Jesus is risen from the dead, gave their preaching credit, and gave the Church entrance into the world and propagated it all over the earth.

(b.) *Her perpetuity to the end of the world.* The promise of the Lord: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against her," only by his Resurrection obtained full certainty. Christ having proved his Divinity by his Resurrection, the Church can now console herself in all difficulties and persecutions with these words: "My enemies may exert all their power and malice for my destruction, they can not destroy me, for Jesus has assured me protection from all my enemies and perpetuity to the end of the world, and his word deserves the fullest credit, because by his Resurrection he has stamped the seal of Divinity on his person and doctrine." Let us rejoice with her in these days, when we see her circumvented and persecuted on every side, and let us console ourselves with the thought that her enemies can oppress, but not suppress and destroy her, and that sooner or later the day of triumph will dawn for her.

(c.) *The truth and divinity of her faith and doctrine.* The faith which she teaches she has from Christ, her Founder, who is the Son of God. She also has the certainty that she will keep this divine doctrine pure and undefiled to the end of time, because Christ promised her his and the Holy Ghost's assistance for all ages. She can, therefore, say: "As it is impossible that Christ, the Son of God, and the Holy Ghost, can teach an untruth, so impossible is it that I teach falsehood and lead men into error, because I am under the perpetual guidance of Christ and the Holy Ghost. The Church, therefore, rejoices that, as the infallible teacher of truth, she is able to instruct the people of all times in the true faith, and to conduct them to their eternal destiny. Let us rejoice at the inestimable grace of being children of the Catholic Church, and of having, as such, the only true and saving faith.

(d.) *Her power for the salvation of men.* Christ made the Church his representative upon earth, and gave her the power to announce his doctrine, to offer his holy Sacrifice, to administer his holy Sacraments; in a word, to do everything that is required for the purification and sanctification of man. Whatever she binds upon earth, is also bound in heaven; and whatever she looses upon earth, is also loosed in heaven.—

*Matt. 18: 18.* The great of this world have power only over the bodies of men and over time; the Church has power over their souls and over eternity. There is no sin so great that she has not the power to forgive; she shuts hell, and opens heaven. Why should the Church not rejoice at the power entrusted to her by Christ? And why should we not deem ourselves happy to belong to a Church that possesses in abundance the necessary means of grace for salvation?

*II. By the spiritual resurrection of her children.* She has reason to rejoice—

*1. On account of the most deplorable condition from which her children are rescued by the spiritual resurrection.* All those who are not yet spiritually risen, that is, who have yet a grievous sin on their conscience, are extremely wretched; for—

(a.) *They are in the state of the displeasure of God.* God can not possibly be pleased with them, nor love them, because they have grievously offended him; for as often as they sinned, they insulted him, despised him, rebelled against him, and because they continue this offense against him as long as they continue in sin. What an evil is the wrath of God! Two courtiers once misbehaved in church during the divine service. It came to the ears of the king, who called them, and said to them: "You must never come again before my eyes." They were so terrified that the one became sick and died, the other became insane. If the displeasure of an earthly king effected this, what will the wrath of God do, who is the King of heaven and earth? Need we wonder that on the day of judgment the reprobate, on beholding the wrathful countenance of the Judge, full of terror, will cry out to the mountains and hills to cover them and hide them from, the face of the Judge?

(b.) *They can do nothing meritorious.* Let them do as much good as they may, practice the most heroic virtues, they can not expect the least reward for it hereafter; they are destitute of supernatural life, which is sanctifying grace, resembling a dead man, who can not move. The word of the Apostle applies to them: "If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing"—*I. Cor. 13: 3.* As long as they live in the state of sin, all their good works, fasting, prayer, alms-deeds, all their pains and labors, all their sufferings and tribulations are without value and lost for eternity.

(c.) *They are in great danger of being lost forever, especially if they live for a long time in sin without repentance.* Death may overtake them in the midst of their sinful career, as it happens every day. What

then? They will share the lot of the people at the deluge, of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, of Ophni and Phinees. God must, unless they cease to offend him, turn away and withdraw his grace from them; the result will be that they will never be converted, because they would need, not usual, but extraordinary, graces for their conversion. The longer they continue in sin, the more they fall into blindness and obstinacy, whence their conversion, unless God gives them great graces, is rendered very difficult, if not absolutely impossible.

Now, when the Church sees so many of her children, who heretofore have lived in sin, make an end of this deplorable condition by a spiritual resurrection from the grave of sin, shall she not rejoice and be glad, she, the mother who loves even the greatest sinner most affectionately, and wishes nothing more ardently than that he do penance be converted, and live? The widow and mother of Naim, whose only son Christ raised up, could certainly have no greater joy than the Church has over the spiritual resurrection of her children.

2. *On account of the inestimable graces which are imparted to her children by the spiritual resurrection.*

(a.) *They obtain the forgiveness of their sins and are delivered from the everlasting punishments due to them.* Sin, as faith teaches us, is the greatest, nay, the only evil, because all other evils spring from it, and because it makes man miserable for time and eternity. The fire of hell, in which the reprobate will burn forever, was kindled by sin, for if the angels had not sinned, there would be no hell, and if sin had not entered into the world, no man would go to hell. And what terrible punishment is hell! To be cast away for ever, to be tortured for ever without the least cessation or mitigation! Now all those sinners who truly and permanently become converted at Easter, escape this terrible state.

(b.) *They recover all the merits that had been lost by sin, and the faculty of acquiring new merit for heaven.* The merits which one has acquired in the state of grace, but which he forfeited through a grievous sin, are revived, as soon as by a true conversion he restores himself in the state of grace; moreover, the good which he does in the state of grace, and with a pure intention, becomes meritorious for heaven.

(c.) *They again become children of God and heirs of heaven.* To be a child of God, to be able to say, God loves me—loves me more than ever a father loved his child—is not this the greatest grace that can be imparted to us? If a king should adopt the child of a poor beggar, would it not be a singular case? would not others envy such a child? But what is an earthly king compared with God? Not as much as a drop



of dew compared with the ocean. What a grace, then, to be a child of God! And what shall I say of heaven, to the heirship of which the sinner is restored as soon as he rises from the grave of sin? Is not heaven, with its eternal, unspeakable joys, worth all?

Now, you find that the Easter joy of the Church over the spiritual resurrection of her children is natural. Why should not this affectionate mother, whose heart is all love, rejoice and be glad when she sees that in this acceptable time many of her children leave the broad way that leads to destruction, and enter upon the narrow road that leads to life? Why should she not exult over the inestimable happiness of which they become sharers by their conversion? Oh, that all that lie in the grave of sin would rise to the life of grace in order to cause a great Easter joy to their mother, the Church!

## PART II.

The Church has at Easter not *only* joy, but *also* sorrow. *What causes the sorrow of the Church?*

1. *Some of her children neglect to comply with their Easter duty, to confess and to go to communion.* It is a strict law of the Church to confess our sins at least once a year, and at Easter to receive the Blessed Eucharist. To receive communion worthily, we must be free at least from every mortal sin: that we may receive it worthily, it is a universal custom to go, not only to communion, but also to confession. He who neglects the reception of the holy Sacraments at Easter, commits a mortal sin, and if he perseveres in his disobedience, may be deprived of Christian burial. Christians who do not go to confession and communion even at Easter, give a poor testimony to themselves; they give us to understand that they have lost all religious feeling and sentiment, and perhaps even the faith, for, indeed, it shows a great degeneracy and a moral corruption, not to go to one's Easter duty. Such impious people generally make an unholy and unhappy end. The Church fears this, and hence her sorrow, when she sees that some of her children neglect at Easter the reception of the Sacraments. She is greatly grieved at such stubborn children, and breaks forth with the complaint: "I have brought up children and exalted them, but they have despised me."—*Is. i: 2.*

(b.) *Many of her children receive the Sacraments unworthily.* The number of those who neglect their Easter duty, is smaller than of those who receive the Sacraments unworthily. The great majority go to confession, but how do they confess? Without contrition and a purpose of amendment, they do not detest the evil which they have done, they do not think of giving up their sinful

life, they are not resolved to avoid bad company, to quit cursing, swearing, blaspheming, drunkenness and gambling, unchaste conversation and songs, to restore unjust goods, to give up enmity, to commit no more injustice in their dealings with others. They content themselves with a superficial examination of conscience, so that they are not able to make an entire confession, they do not rectify their former invalid confessions, they knowingly conceal mortal sins in confession, and other things which necessarily ought to be confessed, and so it comes that they confess unworthily. And as after such a confession they go to communion, they burden their conscience with a double sacrilege. How deplorable is the condition of such Christians! They are worse off after the reception of the Sacraments than they were before, for they are not only defiled with their old sins, but have added a double sacrilege to the catalogue of their crimes. Their condition can not be deplored too much, for there is no greater crime than a sacrilege, especially the sacrilege of an unworthy communion; for it is not only the profanation of a sacred thing, but of a thing most sacred. For if the sinner, having made an unworthy confession, allows the priest to give him absolution, it is the abuse of the sacred blood of Jesus, which, falling upon a criminal as it then does, is more profaned, abused, and condemned, than when the Jews shed it upon the earth and trampled it under their feet. The Sacrament of Penance is a sentence of absolution, but he that receives it unworthily, from whatever reason, changes the sentence of absolution into a sentence of condemnation. He who goes to communion after such a confession, receives unworthily, and he that receives unworthily, becomes guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, commits the sin which the Jews committed when they crucified Jesus, and eats and drinks judgment to himself, that is, eternal damnation.—*I. Cor. 11: 27-30.* And as at Easter many do not confess from a free impulse and in the spirit of penance, but more from compulsion, from human respect, and without a good will, it can not be doubted that many at Easter receive the Sacraments unworthily. Has the Church, then, no reason for sorrow? Why should she not feel grieved when she sees that so many of her children, whom she would save, do not permit themselves to be saved, and that the means which should bring them grace and salvation are instrumental to their perdition.

3. *The majority of her children relapse.* When the Israelites had come to the river Jordan and were about to enter the land of Chanaan, the waters that came down from above stood in one place, and swelling up like a mountain, were seen afar off from the city, and those that were beneath ran down into the Dead Sea. And all the people passed over through the channel that was dried up, as they had done before in the Red Sea, and when they had passed over, the waters

returned into the channel, and ran as they were wont before.—*Jos.* 3: 16, 17; 4: 18–24. The same can be said of many Christians. Now, at Easter, they receive the Sacraments and put a stop to their sins, but the Easter-time is scarcely over, when the waters of sin run as before: they drink again, gamble, curse, swear, blaspheme, are unchaste, just as before. Tell me, is it not so? Are there not many here present who must acknowledge, that soon after their Easter confession and communion, they, as a rule, return to their old life of sin? What kind of a conversion is that which lasts only a few days or weeks? Such relapsing Christians can expect no other end than that of King Saul and Balaam, who perished on account of their relapsing into their former vices.

When the Church, our holy mother, who is so solicitous for our welfare, sees that so many of her children after Easter commit the old sins again, and perhaps fall yet deeper than before, should she not be grieved? Should she not mourn and lament, when she has only too much reason to fear the worst for the salvation of these relapsing sinners?

#### PERORATION.

Oh, that there were none among us who will cause this sorrow and sadness to our mother the Church. Oh, that we all would celebrate a spiritual resurrection, which is a true image of the corporal Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! Let us, therefore, feast, according to the admonition of the Apostle, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Let us cleanse and sanctify our hearts by a worthy reception of the Sacraments, and preserve with the greatest care the treasure of sanctifying grace. Let us offer ourselves without reserve to God, and serve him with unwavering fidelity all the days of our lives, that we may become worthy to celebrate with our holy mother the Church an everlasting Easter in heaven. Amen.







